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ABSTRACT

The introductory chapter of this paper asserts that film can be an integral part of the classroom language arts program and shows the relationship of filmmaking to literature appreciation, communication skills, reading, and the development of creativity. Chapter two justifies film as a creative art that should be taught to children; chaper three discusses visual literacy and suggests an approach to screen education; and chapter four, which surveys film in the elementary school, discusses the recent increase in student filmmaking, centers of screen education, and teacher preparation for screen education. Chapter five reports a 10-week unit on film study and filmmaking that was taught in grades four through six; the filmmaking procedures used in the unit are described in detail. The final chapter evaluates the unit in terms of children's learning gains in studying and producing films and offers suggestions for future film classes. The paper includes a bibliography of relevant publications, a filmography of films used in the unit, and appendixes that describe the films made by the children and present additional information about their production. (GW)

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A Plan B Paper

Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School

of the University of Minnesota

by

Carole Cox

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: FILM AND THE LANGUAGE ARTS

Film, the liveliest art, can be an integral part of any classroom teacher's language arts program, particularly if it is regarded as a communication skill and consideration is given to the many intricate ways film language and written and spoken language may be woven together: film and literature, film and oral and written expression, film and reading, and film and creativity.

Film and Children's Literature

In the early stages of creating a film, children's literature can be a rich source of plots, narratives, characterizations, settings, images and moods. Not that literature should substitute for original scripts or that a film is merely a visual interpretation of the written word; the film today is a unique and powerful art form, perhaps the most significant of our time. But since art is not produced in a vacuum, ideas from children's literature can merge with the child's own experience to create his particular vision of the world through moving pictures.

This is not to suggest that filmmaking should merely serve to produce visual interpretations of fine books. But just as fine painting or music has so often served as stimuli for the creative mind of the writer, so can good literature provide raw material for the imaginative filmmaker. Artists do not create in a void. Nature, life and the other arts all serve as the basic stuff from which the creative mind observes, selects, and

rearranges something new, beautiful and meaningful. Children's literature can supply endless ideas for the child filmmaker to filter through his creative consciousness and re-create in visual form.

Film and Communication

Film is art and film is also a form of communication: very powerful and magnetic. Anything committed to film can be shared with others. The filmmakers percepts can be translated to filmic concepts and convey meaning to the film viewer. And, there is a very explicit film language. J.M.L. Peters, a prominent European film teacher, describes it:

> Not only in a metaphorical but also in a proper sense, the film medium may be regarded as a language--in other words, a system of possibilities for representation, expression and communication. The film image is not a mechanical reproduction of reality; it is in the same sense as the word a "token" or "sign" of that reality. Just as in word language, it represents this reality each time in a different manner. However, it is the reality of visual and aural impressions--thereby leaving room for the intentions of the maker of the film itself, as well as for the interpretations of the spectator. It derives its meaning or value not only from the thing it represents but also from the manner in which the maker of the film refers to that thing.[1]

What relationship does film language have to children's written and spoken language? Young filmmakers must effectively communicate and cooperate in order to come up with a workable script, and the individual child must concretize his images and ideas into script form so that others involved in the film--cameramen, actors, etc.--can read, interpret, and carry out the

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[1] J.M.L. Peters, "The Necessity of Learning How to See a Film," Audio-Visual Communication Review, III (Summer, 1955), 201.

film production. This is one aspect of the social interaction or sharing that Piaget considers critical in a teaching-learning experience. Children need to share their ideas and learn from each other. They need to realize that there are more ways of doing things than the one they thought of and develop critical thinking skills as a result. He remarks: "Cooperation is indeed co-operation."[2] He comments further:

> The mere fact, then, of telling one's thought, of telling it to others, or of keeping silence and telling it only to oneself must be of enormous importance to the fundamental structure and functioning of thought in general, and of child logic in particular.[3]

During the shooting of a film, the activity, the language, and the ideas of a child have a very close association. If the children are dramatizing a story, they are trying to be, really be, the character they have read about. Or they are trying to create a mood, image, or setting on film. Some educationists suggest that language is directed most effectively when it is used in action. Jerome Bruner suggests that when language conveys the content of experience there is, "more often than not a requirement of developing correspondence between what we do, what we see, and what we say. It is this correspondence that is most strikingly involved in reading and writing, in school learning, and in other abstract pursuits."[4] Film is a perfect media

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[2]Eleanor Duckworth, Piaget Rediscovered (New York, 1964), p. 4.

[3]Jean Piaget, The Language and Thought of the Child (New York, 1965), p. 64.

[4]Jerome S. Bruner, Studies in Cognitive Growth (New York, 1966), p. 322.

for children to express themselves and to communicate with others.

Film and Reading

Film is also a natural asset to the reading program. The two activities impinge upon each other in many ways: motivation, vocabulary growth, comprehension and critical reading skills, reading for purpose and meaning, extending reading, reading as a thinking process and creative reading, to name a few. Children's literature and tradebooks are not the only source of printed ideas for films. Any reading source is possible film fare--newspapers, comics, and books in the content areas such as social studies or science can inspire filmmaking. This is wonderful motivation for children to read with a purpose--searching for the spark of an idea while reading that will set a new film rolling in their mind's eye--and George Spache maintains that "Students who can set strong purposes for their reading comprehend significantly better than those who set vague purposes."[5]

Creative filmmaking meshes particularly well with the individualized approach to reading in this respect since the children select their own reading materials. The filmmaking then becomes an independent activity and preparation for sharing the books they have read and which may have inspired a filmic idea. Helen Darrow explains why this is important:

> Sharing activities provide individuals with a sense of satisfaction in progress and accomplishments, motivating them toward greater achievement. Group members benefit by getting

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[5]George Spache, Reading in the Elementary School (Boston, 1969), p. 467.

> valuable information; sharing leads to new reading and insights into the many purposes and pleasures of reading.[6]

Some of the sharing activities she suggests are:

1. Activities to share information gained from reading.
2. Activities to interest others in reading.
3. Activities to share feelings and impressions.
4. Activities to extend learnings.[7]

Several film-connected projects could come under these headings: reviewing books with suggestions for filmmaking possibilities and preparing a list or card file of these books or books on photography and filmmaking are good activities to interest others in reading. The making of the film itself, be it fanciful or documentary, is an excellent activity to share feelings and impressions and to extend learnings. As the audience, the rest of the class participates in the sharing by becoming critical viewers and potential re-viewers of the film.

In addition to wide reading for a specific purpose, and sharing, what other part can reading play in all this filmic activity? What kinds of reading skills and competencies are needed and developed during filmmaking? Preparing a good shooting script (essential for most filmmakers, the film genius notwithstanding) relates to reading in many ways.

Practice in the skill of ordering is implicit in script preparation. Each scene must be arranged in a logical sequence of events.

Script writing for films is yet another way to practice

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[6]Helen Darrow and Virgil Homes, Approaches to Individualized Reading (New York, 1966), p. 54.

[7]Ibid.

and use this skill. And in the case of writing a script for a film they are actually going to make, children are highly motivated to control the order for the resulting film will in some way be dependent on this.

Filmmakers often use special story board forms for blocking out a film's visuals and sound. Children love to use these special papers to organize their ideas preparatory to filming. They are sheets with four large squares to frame scenes in a vertical column on the left hand side. The right hand side of the page is for comments, dialogue, shooting directions, sound effects, etc. Using these sheets is more meaningful than an ordinary follow-up exercise sheet usually employed to practice reading skills. It is an important activity to the child--important for the future success of the film. It has application and meaning. It is reading and language skill in use, not merely reading or language usage.

Scripts also provide practice in many related critical reading skills. If children are filming a story they have read, it is absolutely necessary that they be able to outline the plot, much as they would for a story dramatization for creative drama. And they don't need to be told to do an outline. The process is implicit in the creation of a film.

Use of a script often demands that the children be able to use and read symbols, which are often used as shooting directions. For example, symbols to indicate panning from left to right, a dolly shot, close up and others. In this respect they must also be able to interrelate visuals (sketch of the scene in

the script frame), symbols (as for shooting directions) and words (dialogue or directors notes). They must effectively decode and encode when using a script and critically read, interpret and apply what they have read to the production of the film.

There are also several comprehension skills that can be directly related to filmmaking. George Spache offers us two lists of critical reading skills developed by McCanne and Williams. The following list is a shortened composite of the two, emphasizing those skills that filmmaking might effectively teach.

1. Understanding (establishing) sequence.
2. Visualizing characters, settings events.
3. Using imagination.
4. Forming sensory impressions.
5. Identifying and evaluating character traits.
6. Interpreting figurative and idiomatic language.
7. Perceiving relationships.
8. Reacting to mood or tone.
9. Recognizing emotional reactions and motives.
10. Relating story experiences to personal experiences.
11. Research.
12. Recognizing story plots.
13. Identifying with story characters.
14. Obtaining ideas from many sources.
15. Perceiving analogous situations and ideas.[8]

While several of these skills are in use throughout the whole filmmaking process, many of them come into play most actively during the shooting of the film. For example, children playing the part of a story character in a film are strongly identifying and evaluating character traits and "identifying with story characters." And it is seldom that only one child benefits from this type of activity. The director, if there is

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[8]Spache, op. cit., pp. 455-457.

one, and the rest of the group can become involved in this aspect of filmmaking, considering the character, critically observing the characterization, evaluating the interpretation presented by the actor, and offering suggestions for improvement or reinforcement for a valid characterization.

In addition to "using imagination," "forming sensory impressions" and "reacting to mood or tone" while reading preparatory to filmmaking the child filmmaker must constantly "visualize characters, settings, and events." If the student has been motivated to read by the prospect of filmmaking, he may do this during all his reading, or while practicing other critical reading skills related to filmmaking such as "research" or "obtaining ideas from many sources."

This "visualizing" reaches a level of application as well. The child is literally able to project what he "sees" in his mind's eye on to the movie screen. The crucial step in between is discovering a way to do it--by drawing on film, animating, using puppets, and by using another comprehension skill, "perceiving analogous situations and ideas."

Another of these skills suggested by both McCanne and Williams "relating story experiences to personal experiences" seems to be basic to the whole concept of relating reading to filmmaking. To suggest that children's films spring directly from print sources would be glossing over the film's credit. The child draws on his personal experiences, reading experiences, aesthetic experiences, and whatever other type of experiences there are to go from a kind of imaginative Gestalt to the

finished film.

Film is art, film is language, and film is fun. And film is a perfect media for children to express themselves and to communicate with others. If success in learning to read is in some measure dependent on the pupil's language life, then filmmaking is a natural asset to the reading program. Young filmmakers use language in a variety of exciting ways; talking over images and ideas for films, preparing scripts, re-writing, and editing.

Jeannette Veatch suggests that "those activities that enhance a child's ability to use words freely, spontaneously, and communicatively will improve reading at surprizing rates. These are better reading activities than those traditionally labeled as such, as they are vital and dynamic in character."[9]

There are not many activities one can name that are more vital or dynamic than filmmaking. Films even move.

Film and Creativity

In addition to forming a close association with children's literature, their written and spoken language, and reading, filmmaking offers a new form of creative expression to the child. Filmmaking may be the most direct means teachers have of helping children materialize their imaginative visions, fantasies, and day dreams.

No one is looking out the window when you are choosing a cameraman, no one moans when you pass out paper to write a

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[9]Jeannette Veatch, Reading in the Elementary School (New York, 1966), p. 357.

shooting script, and no one complains about the responsibility of extra effort of "starring" in a film. Filmmaking offers a new kind of creative freedom to the child. It defies a structured approach. It thrives equally as an individual effort or as the collaboration of a group. It follows no rules and has virtually no limitations. The spontaneous and accidental happening is easily incorporated, often prized. All this is not to say that filmmaking is nothing more than loading, pointing and shooting a camera (apologies to Andy Warhol). Films are hard work. But having personally experienced the elementary school child's willingness, no his eagerness, to spend hours hashing out ideas, reading for background information, setting up scenes or preparing animation layouts, re-writing, re-shooting, and that most exasperating task, editing, one thing is obvious to me: despite the demands, filmmaking excites children. It offers them a new form of creative expression. It encourages them to "see," to select, to interpret, to arrange and form something new and fresh and all their own--a film. How wonderful for them to be able to project what they see and think and feel through the medium of the camera on to the screen.

But why suggest filmmaking as an activity to develop creative abilities in children? Aren't there numerous other activities more commonly used that can stimulate creativity? Why venture into filmmaking? Besides, isn't the curriculum overcrowded already?

In addition to social and cultural reasons for teaching film, the "immediacy" of the media and the fast-paced world of

images and sounds that surround today's child, even a cursory glance at the literature on teaching for creativity makes it clear that filmmaking can be a hand-in-glove activity with creative learning. There seem to be two basic reasons: 1) film is a very sensitive form of communication and an art and 2) the actual filmmaking process seems tailor made to satisfy any criteria for problem solving and thus facilitate the establishment of a climate for creativity in the classroom.

As an art form, film is a means for children to express their feelings and ideas in modes ranging from stark realism to playful fantasy. The visual image can serve to symbolize their concepts. And as a form of communication, film can allow children to share what they have created. What relevance does this have for teaching for creativity? Carl Rogers explains:

> It is doubtful whether a human being can create, without wishing to share his creation. It is the only way he can assuage the anxiety of separateness and assure himself, that he belongs to the group . . . He does not create in order to communicate, but once having created he desires to share this new aspect of himself-in-relation-to-his-environment with others.[10]

The appeal of the film medium for many people and the permanence of the film itself enhance its ability to communicate to many people at one time. In addition to those qualities, film has a unique communicative ability that has special relevance for children; it does not require previous skills training such as writing, some art mediums, dance, or music. Any child can use a camera immediately to select and interpret images on film. This

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[10] C. R. Rogers, "Toward a Theory of Creativity," ETC: A Review of General Semantics, II (1954), 249-260.

seems to me a freeing device, especially for the culturally disadvantaged child, the child who speaks non-standard English, the shy child, the slow learner, etc. These children will be able to create something and communicate it to others through the camera and the projector. They don't need special skills, they don't need to be in front of a group, they don't even need to be there at all to show the film. But it seems children do need a chance to communicate what they have created. Morris I. Stein, in his discussion of creativity as intra- and inter-personal process explains:

> The fact that the individual has completed his work does not mean that the total creative process is at an end. To complete the creative process the final product needs to be presented to and accepted by a group of significant others as tenable, useful or satisfying. . . . When the final product has been accepted as tenable, useful, or satisfying to a group of significant others, it provides the creative individual with significant psychological feedback. By accepting the product and regarding it as creative, the group indicates that it accepts and implicitly approves of the needs which initially motivated the creative person to deviate from accepted patterns and to prove the unknown.[11]

In addition to artistic expression and communication, there is a third aspect of film that can encourage creative thinking: the actual film production. The step-by-step process of creating a film, a lengthier and more complicated process than most elementary school activities, seems in many ways identical to the problem solving procedure described by Alex F. Osborn.

1. Fact-Finding
Problem definition: Picking out and pointing up the problem.
Preparation: Gathering and analyzing the pertinent data.
2. Idea-Finding

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[11] S. J. Parnes (ed.), Source Book of Creative Thinking (New York, 1962), p. 90.

Idea-production: Thinking up tentative ideas as possible leads.
Idea-development: Selecting from resultant ideas, adding others, and reprocessing by means of modification, combination, et cetera.

3. Solution-Finding

Evaluation: Verifying the tentative solutions by tests and otherwise.
Adoption: Deciding on and implementing the final solution.

Regardless of sequence, everyone of those steps calls for deliberate effort and creative imagination. At best, the process involves an alteration between creative thinking and judicial thinking--on a sort of stop-and-go basis.[12]

This last sentence is an encapsulation of the filming process: periods of creative thinking interspersed with periods of filmmaking and all the minute choices that must be made to set up even one shot or splice one small segment of film. Films do not spring full-blown from the camera--it takes a week to develop the film for one thing. Filmmaking is a lengthy process which allows ample time for work, which Henri Poincare suggests is necessary for creativity for "it is possible, and of a certainty it is only fruitful, if it is on the one hand preceded and on the other hand followed by a period of conscious work."[13]

In addition to being an art, a form of communication, and an object lesson in problem-solving, how can filmmaking help create a climate for creativity in the elementary classroom? How does filmmaking measure up against a criteria of the necessary conditions to support the growth of creativity such as the one synthesized by Torrance based on the research of various

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[12]Alex F. Osborn, address to the Sixth Annual Creative Problem-Solving Institute at University of Buffalo, 1960.

[13]Henri Poincare, The Foundations of Science (Paris, 1924), pp. 383-394.

investigators (Kris, Maslow, Rogers, Stein, Barron, Kubie, MacKinnon)?

> 1. The absence of serious threat to the self, the willingness to risk.
> 2. Self-awareness--in touch with one's feelings.
> 3. Self-differentiation--sees self as being different from others.
> 4. Both openness to the ideas of others and confidence in one's own perceptions of reality or one's own ideas.
> 5. Mutuality in interpersonal relations--balance between excessive quest for social relations and pathological rejection of them.[14]

The very nature of the filming process itself, the distance between the individual and the final product created by the time it takes to develop film and the mechanical, push-button quality of the camera seem perfect to remove what Torrance calls "serious threat to the self" and replace it with "willingness to risk." A child may not be afraid to choose a subject and film it with a camera in the same sense that he or she would be afraid to suggest a divergent idea in a class discussion, draw or paint unusual subject matter, or participate in creative drama in front of an audience, activities which may result in immediate feed-back, perhaps negative. On-the-spot evaluation is impossible. The film has to be developed first. And the mechanical nature of the filming process can be paradoxically both exciting and reassuring to children; exciting because of the thrill of actually shooting a film and reassuring because some of the responsibility for the final product will rest on factors outside the child's control such as lighting, focusing, dust on the lens, etc. This dual

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[14] E. Paul Torrance, Guiding Creative Talent (New Jersey, 1962), p. 143.

nature of the camera seems to offer what C.R. Rogers calls a "climate of safety" at the same time it affords the child an infinite number of artistic choices--"absence of serious threat to self" and "willingness to risk."

Torrance's second criteria for a creative environment, "self-awareness--in touch with one's feelings" seems to mesh particularly well with the film medium. Henry Putsch has been making films with children for years. He notes an important aspect of the filming experience:

> Awareness of Identity. Most of us have experienced the surprize of hearing our own voice on the tape recorder--"But that is not my voice." A serious filmmaking attempt reveals both the inner and exterior self. The exterior self-image usually does not match the one we have learned from photographs and mirrors. The fantasies, the fears, and the aspirations of the inner self are revealed with a clarity made all the more intense by the "reality" of the medium. Further, the identity-ego factors achieved in the process are enough to justify the whole effort.[15]

As for Torrance's third criteria, "self-differentiation--sees self as being different from other," filmmaking is a powerful and positive way to accomplish this. Film is a wide open medium. It's virtually impossible to copy anyone else and there is little pressure to conform since the range of possibilities is so great. Children adapt film techniques but bring fresh new themes to their films. Each child has a rare opportunity to see and be seen as "being different from others" by sharing their film with an audience.

Filmmaking is admirably suited to satisfy Torrance's

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[15]Anthony Schillachi and John M. Culkin (eds.), Films Deliver (New York, 1970), p. 191.

fourth criteria for creative growth, "both openness to the ideas of others and confidence in one's own perceptions of reality or one's own ideas." Filmmaking requires a diversity of abilities; script writing, organizing, preparing properties, using equipment, recording sound, splicing, editing, etc. If children are making a group film, it's imperative they consider the ideas of others if the film is to be resolved; cameraman and director must carefully consider each other's views, script writer and actor must understand one another, editor and soundperson must synchronize ideas, sounds and visuals. A group film project can be an object lesson in sharing ideas.

Piaget's discussion of the development of knowledge goes hand in glove with the concept of filmmaking as an ideal means for the child to "perceive reality and clarify his own ideas about it with confidence," the rest of Torrance's fourth criteria for creative growth:

> Knowledge is not a copy of reality. To know an object, to know an event, is not simply to look at it and make a mental copy, or image of it. To know an object is to act on it. To know is to modify, to transform the object, and to understand the process of this transformation, and as a consequence to understand the way the object is constructed. An operation is thus the essence of knowledge; it is an interiorized action which modifies the object of the knowledge.[16]

Filmmaking is a natural activity to develop confidence in children's perception of reality and their ideas. Perhaps one of the appeals of film to children is the magic of seeing their

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[16]Jean Piaget, Development and Learning (New York, 1964), p. 18.

perceptions translated into moving, visual images. One filmmaker, Ingmar Bergman, describes the source of his perceptions and the way in which he embodies them in reality:

> A film for me begins with something very vague--a chance remark or a bit of conversation, a hazy but agreeable event unrelated to any particular situation. It can be a few bars of music, a shaft of light across the street. . . . These are split second impressions that disappear as quickly as they come yet leave behind a mood--like pleasant dreams. It is a mental state not an actual story, but one abounding in fertile associations and images. Most of all, it is a brightly colored thread sticking out of the dark sack of the unconscious. If I begin to wind up this thread, and do it carefully, a complete film will emerge.[17]

Other qualities of filmmaking seem also to satisfy Torrance's last condition necessary to support the growth of creativity: "mutuality in interpersonal relations--balance between excessive quest for social relations and pathological rejection of them." British film teacher Don Waters emphasizes this aspect of group filmmaking:

> Filmmaking is essentially a corporate activity and never more so than with young people. From the initial story conference to the final editing of the film there is a continuous group participation and the constant pooling of ideas. At the same time there is the opportunity for a wide range of individual contributions from a variety of talents--creative writing, dramatic expression, making various props, combinations of technical and artistic skills in lighting and camera work, the careful recording of set and action details for continuity purposes, designing and painting titles and so on.[18]

Film may have great potential as a language art and as a tool to stimulate children's creativity. The distance created by

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[17]Ingmar Bergman, "Introduction," Four Screenplays of Ingmar Bergman (New York, 1960).

[18]Don Waters, Creative Approach in Times Educational Supplement (London, February 8, 1963).

the camera encourages them to take chances and express their diversity. Film is a sensitive medium that allows them to "see feelingly" and communicate these feelings.

There is also an intangible element of filmmaking that is nonetheless very important in considering learning activities in the language arts and ways to encourage creativity. Consider how a class of children today would respond to the question: "Would you rather read a book, write a story, or make a movie?" Both the power of the film medium and its newness offer a challenge and excitement to children--elements which seem to make it an ideal learning activity.

This paper will look at several important aspects of film study and filmmaking presented in the following ways; a brief synthesis of contemporary film theory and aesthetics, an approach to film study and filmmaking, a survey of current film study and filmmaking programs in the elementary school, and a description of a teaching unit on film with an evaluation of this unit and suggestions for future film study and filmmaking with children. It should be noted that the viewpoint expressed in this paper is that of a movie fan who believes that film is art, language, and a worthwhile learning activity.

CHAPTER II

THE ART OF THE FILM

Film theory is a montage of ideas, as is all art theory. The difference between film and the other arts, however, is that many people reject, or at least vaguely question, that film even has a theory. After all, critics scoff, "Is it art?" Aesthetes often direct this question to a particular work of painting, sculpture, music or literature, but in the case of films, it is meant to refer to the entire medium. Perhaps this explains why otherwise sophisticated, cultured and broadminded individuals scorn the film--they view it as mere MEDIA, not an acceptable medium of art. These sceptics dismiss the film as an impersonal, detached mechanism that cannot possibly excite the deeper impulses of the artist.

Film has its defenders, among them Ralph Block, who forcefully refutes the philistine critics of film, and contends that the machinery of the motion picture is a viable art medium:

> It is fashionable to say that the camera is impersonal, but those who use the camera know this is untrue. Indeed, even abstractly, it is no more impersonal than a steel chisel, or a camel's hairbrush. The camera is on the one hand as intimate as the imagination of those who direct it.[1]

Still, the film detractors persist. Many professional critics and cultural observers fear the "mass-media film" as an evil force, alienating the individual from meaningful personal relationships, and draining the spectator's emotions. Ernest van

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[1]Ralph Block, "Not Theatre, Not Literature, Not Painting," The Dial (January, 1927), p. 154.

den Haag, a conservative sociologist states:

> All mass media in the end alienate people from personal meaningful experiences, and though appearing to offset it, intensify their moral isolation from each other, from reality, and from themselves . . . They . . . impair the capacity for meaningful experience.[2]

Other more liberal critics such as Dwight MacDonald jeer and dismiss the motion picture as "popular art," "mass culture," and "kitsch." In MacDonald's words, "mass culture has also developed new media of its own into which the serious artist rarely ventures: radio, the movies, comic books, detective stories, science fiction, and television."[3] Thus, MacDonald and other critics see the media nature of filmmaking as an impossible hurdle for even the most agile mind to clear in trying to achieve "high art."

Ernest Lindgren disagrees. In his renowned study, The Art of the Film, he observes:

> When the script writer gives himself up to thought, visualizing the white screen before him, he is precisely in the same position as Cezanne before his canvas; and when, with his minds eye, he sees a succession of visual images pass, he is as much under the spell of the imagination, and as able to profit by it as any creative artist. If this fact is not more obvious it is only because it is obscured by the vast and elaborate machinery of production through which the original ideas have to find their way onto the final projection print.[4]

The charge that film is a mechanical freak, a kind of Robbie Robot sprung full grown from the forehead of the Industrial

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[2]Ernest van den Haag, "Of Happiness and of Despair We Have No Measure," in The Fabric of Society (New York, 1957).

[3]Dwight MacDonald, "A Theory of Man," Diogenes (Summer, 1953), p. 1.

[4]Ernest Lindgren, The Art of the Film (New York, 1963), p. 202.

Revolution is hardly new: and the filmmaker found early defense against such accusation. Noted British philosopher and art historian, Herbert Read, predicted the immense and complex creative possibilities of the motion picture as early as 1932.

> If the film is an art--but what else can it be? A technical process? But so is etching, for example; so is every art that uses a tool. To determine whether a given process is an art or not, we need ask only one question--does it involve SELECTION (his emphasis) . . . Selection . . . is the very first principle of the film; the film is therefore essentially an art.[5]

The fact that the motion picture camera records nature, something that is already there, often leads to the charge that the filmmaker cannot really create--he can only document. How dare he make pretenses to face the same creative choices as Rembrandt standing before his bare canvas, Rodin before his marble block, or Chaucer confronting his blank parchment? The movie-maker can claim no special muse or inspiration; at best, he procures images and passes them along to inert observers in a second hand way.[6] But does an artist of any medium create in a vacuum? How do you distinguish "pure imagination" from the imaginative arrangement of observable phenomena? Is not all creativity a subjective selection from the artist's total experience? As the sculptor, Henry Moore once said: "The observation of nature is part of an artist's life, it enlarges his form knowledge, keeps him fresh and from working only by formula, and

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[5]Herbert Read, "Towards a Film Aesthetic," Cinema Quarterly (Autumn, 1932), p. 8.

[6]See Ernest Lindgren, The Art of the Film, op. cit., p. 195.

and feeds inspiration."[7] And so it is with the film. Henry Moore and Sergei Eisenstein, the great Russian director, share a common physical reality, and a range of choices from which they make artist decisions. The differences between their sculpture and film medias are of kind rather than quality: the raw material, the creative process, and the artist's genius are potentially the same for both. The differences are of technique. Moore selects images, builds up and eliminates certain areas of his stone block; in film, the technique of editing most determines the final product. V.I. Pudovkin, a pre-World War II Russian director, perhaps best explained it:

> To the film director, each shot of the finished film subserves the basic creative force, by power of which the soulless photographs (the separate shots) are engineered into living, cinematographic form . . . editing is the creative force of filmic reality, and . . . nature provides only the raw material with which it works. That precisely is the relationship between reality and the film.[8]

Editing to the film creator, then, is analogous to the word to the poet, color to the painter, and mass to the sculptor.

Since its inception, many scholars have attempted to dignify films by demonstrating how much they resemble the theater, literature, sculpture, painting, music and even architecture. Unfortunately, this creeping ecumenicalism has only served to convince many people that the film is not a worthy art form in itself but needs a crutch to hold up its image in the presence of the other established arts. With friends like this,

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[7] Henry Moore, quoted by Herbert Read in Henry Moore (London, 1944).

[8] V.I. Pudovkin, Film Technique (London, 1933), pp. xiv-xvi.

who needs enemies, the filmmaker might be justified in thinking. While lifting the film out of the mire of mass media, sympathetic critics still hesitate to elevate it higher than the position of a derivative art form, one which at best combines some of the lesser qualities of the recognized fine arts, but which cannot claim to be their equal. The unwanted stepchild of the arts.[9]

Most often, literature is the invisible cloak tossed over films. A screen adaptation of a novel enhances a movie's prestige and box-office success, so it is said. Powerful moments of a film must always be compared (usually unfavorably) to sections of a literary classic; and literary terms (metaphors, similes) are trotted out in film reviews. Ours is a print culture. We expect ideas to be conceptualized and written down. Legibly. Inevitably, literature haunts the film, "translating" the filmic image into a language more comprehensible and familiar to the public.[10]

The distinguished Swedish film creator, Ingmar Bergman, attacks the idea that the motion picture is the poor foster child of literature.

> Film has nothing to do with literature; the character and substance of the two art forms are usually in conflict . . . The written word is read and assimilated by a conscious act of the will in alliance with the intellect; little by little it affects the imagination and the emotions. The process is different with a motion picture. The sequence of pictures plays directly on our feelings.[11]

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[9]For a provocative discussion of the pros and cons of the question of literature and film, see the assorted essays by Vachel Lindsey, Hollis Alpert, Rudolf Arnheim, Ingmar Bergman and others in Film, A Montage of Theories (New York, 1966), approx. pp. 89-147.

[10]Bela Balazs, Theory of Film (London, 1952), pp. 39-43.

[11]Ingmar Bergman, Four Screenplays of Ingmar Bergman (New York, 1960), p. xxi.

Bergman, then, believes that the impact of the film is imagistic and direct, transmitted to the viewer by a visual perception. The force of literature, on the other hand, is linguistic and conceptual, filtered through mental images to the reader. As such, the two art forms are significantly different. While sharing certain raw materials, motifs and styles, the cinematic creator differs intrinsically from the writer. Bergman underscored the gap:

> I myself have never had any ambition to be an author. I do not want to write novels, short stories, essays, biographies, or even plays for the theater. I only want to make films: films about conditions, tensions, pictures, rhythms and characters which are in one way or another important to me. The motion picture, with its complicated process of birth, is my method of saying what I want to my fellow men. I am a filmmaker, not an author.[12]

If the film is needed an art form, separate and distinct from the other arts while holding the same promise of rich, significant learning experiences for the individual, should it not be an integral part of our education? Perhaps one could go a step further and suggest that the film is unique today as an infant art (less than 70 years old), primitive in some ways, but because of this deserving of special attention. In this kind of molten state, films may well be the most accurate record and best means of expression in our high-octane world, as well as the most sensitive, imaginative medium to interpret and comment on modern society. Many observers believe that its greatest impact is yet to be felt. Pudovkin recognized this over thirty years ago.

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[12] Ibid., pp. xxi-xxii.

> I am sure that sound film is potentially the art of the future . . . It is a synthesis of each and every element--the oral, the visual, the philosophical; it is our opportunity to translate the world in all its lines and shadows into a new art form that has succeeded and will supercede all the older arts, for it is the supreme medium in which we can express today and tomorrow.[13]

The motion picture is no longer a poor relation, slipping in the back door unnoticed. Film has proven itself to be a creative art, it can stand on its own merit, and it can perhaps best reflect and interpret our modern age. Children should learn this new visual language today. It will speak for them tomorrow.

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[13]Pudovkin, op. cit., p. 173.

CHAPTER III

AN APPROACH TO SCREEN EDUCATION

Visual Literacy

In 1913 D.W. Griffith explained why he made movies: "The task I'm trying to achieve is above all to make you see."[1] Trying to pin down Griffith's film objective, contemporary phrase-makers often speak of "visual literacy," by which they mean our means of seeing and understanding what we see. Visual Literacy is fast becoming a favorite term of such disparate types as art critics, media men, social commentators and educators. It appears more frequently in books and speeches, national conventions are held annually to study it, and of course, graduate students are rushing in to write dissertations dealing with it. All very interesting, but what does visual literacy mean, and especially what does it mean for today's child? Since we are accustomed to associating literacy to the spoken or written word, visual literacy sounds strange at first, but it need not confuse the listener for it merely expands the meaning of literacy to include the pictorial experience. One thing the First National Conference on Visual Literacy set out to do was to define and clarify the term.

> The group of vision competencies a human being can develop by seeing and at the same time having and interpreting other sensory experiences. They enable a visually literate person to discriminate and interpret the visual actions,

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[1] George Bluestone, "The Limits of the Novel and the Limits of the Film," Novels Into Film (Baltimore, 1957), p. 1.

objects and/or symbols, natural or man-made, that he encounters in his environment.[2]

John L. Debes, Co-Chairman of the conference has even hypothesized "A Hierarchy of Visual Skills" and described the competencies a visually literate person would possess, based on a potpourri of theories gathered from the fields of linguistics, semantics, philosophy, psychology, industrial, vocational, and graphic arts, psycholinguistics, art and screen education. These attributes and skills include the ability to:

> Read visuals with skill.
> Write with visuals, expressing oneself effectively.
> Know the grammar and syntaxes of visual language and be able to apply them.
> Be familiar with the tools of visual literacy and their use.
> Appreciate the master works of visual literacy.
> Be able to translate from visual language to verbal language and vice versa.[3]

These abilities will enable the child to understand and interpret an environment which surrounds him with visual media. A shift in culture, from a print-oriented communication system to one based on moving visual images has left today's child with one foot on the pier and the other on a boat pulling out. Attempting to learn in an educational system centered around pages of print, he lives in a world which innundates him with symbols and language of an all together different nature--the visual media. If one of the goals of public education is to prepare children to meet their culture, perhaps they should become literate in this

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[2]John Debes, Proceedings of the First National Conference on Visual Literacy, NCTE (Pitman, 1970), p. 14.

[3]Ibid., pp. 13-14.

powerful system of communication.

Jerome Bruner, author of Toward a Theory of Instruction, sees a definite relationship between the cultural environment and maturation:

> . . . mental growth is in very considerable measure dependent upon growth from the outside in--mastering of techniques that are embodied in the culture and that are passed on in a contingent dialogue by agents of the culture. This becomes notably the case when language and the symbolic systems of the culture are involved.[4]

Gutenberg revolutionized a communication system. All the ideas that had been previously recorded on wax, stone and wood or preserved in the memories of priests, shaman and jongleurs could be efficiently mass produced on paper and consumed by everyone. But the current electronic revolution is taking over more and more of the power of the printed word and carrying masses of the population along with it, particularly among the young.

Before he graduates from high school, the average student sees about 500 movies, views 15,000 hours of television and spends 10,000 hours in class.[5] Marshall McLuhan attacks the ideological rift separating education and the reality of a child's life and is sharply critical of what he contends is education's failure to equip children with the knowledge necessary to live in an electronic age:

> The youngster today, stepping out of his nursery or TV environment, goes to school and enters a world where the

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[4]Jerome S. Bruner, Toward a Theory of Instruction (Cambridge, 1966), p. 21.

[5]Rodney E. Sheratsky, "Film: The Reality of Being," New Jersey Association of Teachers of English, Vol. 1, No. 1 (April, 1969), p. 1.

> information is scarce but is ordered and structured by fragmented, classified patterns, subjects, schedules. He is utterly bewildered because he comes out of this intricate and complex integral world of electronic information and goes into this nineteenth-century world of classified information that still characterizes the educational establishment . . . . The young today are baffled because of this extraordinary gap between these two worlds.[6]

This is not to suggest that schools haven't attempted to incorporate the mass media into the curriculum. They have. But historically, schools have treated it as the three ugly step sisters treated Cinderella--with marginal tolerance and mild exploitation. For decades, film was forced to make its stealthy entry into the classroom in one of three guises: screen education to combat undesirable moral values fostered by the movies, the instructional film ("Life Cycle of the Monarch Butterfly"), and film as an aid to the teaching of English (Laurence Olivier as Henry V).

In a 1913 issue of the English Journal, author Robert W. Neal advised "Making the Devil Useful," tips on using the commercial film as motivation for English composition. In 1927, Mary Abbot of Columbia University inquired into the effect of motion pictures on acquiring information, forming attitudes, moral conduct, emotional maturity and health. She concluded that movies had an ill effect on children and convinced many teachers that film values should be taught to protect youth from the immoral movie, much as schools today teach units on drug abuse. The Payne Studies of Ohio State University came to a similar

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[6]Marshall McLuhan, "Address at Vision 65," The American Scholar, XXXV (Spring, 1966), 201.

conclusion in their 1933 publication Our Movie Made Children. The preface states: "Here is a book showing the movies for what they really are--a monster Pied Piper, with marvelous trappings, playing tunes irresistably alluring to the youth of the present day." To combat this evil force, film study came under the jurisdiction of the English teacher because of films assumed connection to literature. One popular guidebook commented: "The English or dramatics teacher says, 'I know so little about motion picture appreciation.' You need not be unduly worried about this, however, for only a few people have much information upon the subject. The available information is so limited that one can soon become an authority."[7]

World War II ended the missionary zeal of the 1930's approach to film study, but use of the instructional film, spin off from the Hollywood documentary genre, was prevalent. In the late 1940's and early 1950's, interest in the media was renewed with the advent of television, but remained misguided. Many school systems continued to list study objectives for the mass media but continued to view film as an aid to the teaching of literature. In Minneapolis, for example, students were to see one entertainment film annually ". . . to promote the reading of fine books and to increase enjoyment and appreciation of good films." in that order. Again, film plays Alice in Wonderland to literature's Queen of Hearts.[8]

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[7]Ronald Polito, "The History of Film Teaching in the American School System," Screen Education, September/October, 1965, pp. 10-18.

[8]Ibid.

Suggested Approach to Screen Education

How do screen educators feel film study and filmmaking should be approached? If film is viewed as art rather than "film-and . . . . (music, literature, etc.)" or audiovisual material, the possibilities are myriad. One leading film educator, John M. Culkin, proposes several options, any one of which he feels is a valid treatment of the film:

> Historical: The origin and growth of the motion picture.
> Sociological: The impact of film on society, film as propaganda, film as reflecting society, censorship, and so on.
> Comparative: The relation of film to other arts.
> Thematic: The analysis of the content and values of films.
> Psychological: The effects of films on audiences.
> Educational: The preparation and use of instructional films.
> Creative: The production of films, editing, photography.[9]

Other leading teachers of film caution against attempts to plug film into the curriculum, suggesting a free approach more in tune with the nature of the medium. They ask: Why not begin where the action and the interest is--with the film itself? If turning projectors and cameras on turns children on, why immediately turn them off with an overstructured-curriculum guide-textbook-print approach to an art form that is free and visual in content. Or as film critic Pauline Kael put it: "If you think you can't kill movies, you underestimate the power of education."[10]

Richard Lacey, instructor in the School of Education at

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[9] John Culkin and Anthony Schillaci (eds.), Films Deliver (New York, 1970), p. 68.

[10] Pauline Kael quoted by Fred Silva, "To Look or to See: Film Study in the English Curriculum," The English Record, Vol. No. 1 (October, 1969), pp. 38-45.

the University of Massachusetts, warns teachers against using the film to "search for deep inner meaning," recommending instead a discussion technique he calls "image-sound skim." Here each student recalls an image or sound which quickly comes to mind; and as the exchange of ideas develops, the film is reorchestrated without seeking right or wrong answers, quick generalizations or value judgements. Lacey observes:

> What emerges instead is a gradually richer set of relationships among images, sounds and implied ideas. In this way the art of the film, instead of being killed by excessive analysis, has a fair chance to continue working on the audience. Rhythms, details of setting, mood, counterpoints, transitions, color and lighting subtly affect the processes by which students recall images and sounds.[11]

Admitting the impracticality for "curriculum and lesson planners" to give up the unit approach, he urges a free, almost extracurricular attitude towards film study arguing: "The main purpose of film study is to enlarge the emotional and intellectual territory in which a student perceives himself . . . What matters is the sensibility--the perceptions on which verbalizations are based."[12]

Sharing this attitude is prominent media specialist Rodney E. Sheratsky. In an address given before the New Jersey Association of Teachers of English he describes the challenge of the visual media to the teacher--a strong grip on children's time, interest and desire for relevancy. And the schools have failed to meet the challenge. Contributing factors are the use

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[11] Richard A. Lacey, "Whatdaya Do When the Lights Go On?," Media and Methods, November, 1969, p. 77.

[12] Ibid.

of film study to fight the immorality of the commercial motion picture and the instructional film. He suggests a solution: 1) only teachers with a strong film background should teach film, 2) print-literary type study guides should be avoided, 3) the focus of film study should be the creative expression of the film, what is in the film itself. Sheratsky maintains these are the steps to visual literacy if not a curriculum planner's dream.[13]

Film teachers seem to agree that their method should match the medium. Film creation thrives best in an atmosphere of free expression of visual perceptions. And so should film study.

Historical, thematic, literary and other such approaches seem less successful in encouraging visual literacy and some aesthetic sensitivity than does an open-ended discussion, focusing on students emotional reactions. Colin Young, Chairman of the department of Theatre Arts at U.C.L.A. explains why:

> There is an irrational quality in art which irritates and confounds those who are trying to put knowledge of art into systems . . . we must begin with an assumption of student interest, as well as student taste and sensibility, then I must begin in all cases with what they know, trying to work towards what they don't know yet. This is not, after all, such a bad pedagogic principle. Furthermore, it is the only one with which a teacher of film can survive.[14]

The consensus among prominent media educators seems to be this: children should view and be stimulated by films, they should be allowed to react freely to films, and they should be encouraged to create films. Children and film should be brought

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[13]Rodney E. Sheratsky, "Film: The Reality of Being," New Jersey Association of Teachers of English, Vol. 1, No. 1 (April, 1969), pp. 1-11.

[14]Ibid., p. 6.

together. Film is art, film is language, film is a reflection of culture, society and the individual. Children can comment, contribute, communicate and create with films. Films can form an integral part of a child's education and growth.

CHAPTER IV

A SURVEY OF FILM IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

A survey of screen education in the elementary school has the look of a patchwork quilt, the result of the interest, effort and ingenuity of many early American women, each contributing a different colorful patch to make the quilt. The study of film has emerged in the elementary schools in a similar grassroots fashion, appearing wherever teachers, children, and other interested individuals have combined resources, ideas, talent and energy to engage the film media in an active program in the classroom. The types of film study programs, then, are myriad, almost as many as the individuals and organizations teaching them. Few established programs exist at the state or even district level. It will, therefore, be necessary to examine the varied sources of input for film study to focus the picture of screen education in American elementary schools. Important sources of ideas for elementary film study are programs in the secondary schools where film has gained a firm foothold in recent years. Other sources include leadership in the field of media study, existing programs (private and public, school and community, inner-city), pilot programs, the elementary school film teacher, teacher training and materials and methods developed to teach film to younger children.

David Mallery describes the amorphous nature of a study of film study:

> The "young filmmakers explosion" in senior and junior high schools, and even in some elementary schools, is a phenomenon so delightful, so sudden, and so rich in potential

> that it needs a book for itself or, better, a series of on-going reports, pamphlets, television programs, news flashes, and seminars even to keep up with it. I suspect no one agency, office, Ph.D. student, or enthusiast is going to be able to keep track of this phenomenon.[1]

The "explosion" Mallery describes in his study, Film in the Life of the School, has been building for a long time. A glance at vintage issues of one educational publication, English Journal, highlights the sincere interest of teachers in film since the 1930's and 1940's:

> It is indeed a disease of education that films are still only a toy in our schools, still only an incidental and not an essential and indispensable procedure. (1946)[2]

> A study of the motion picture . . . is indispensable in the English program . . . they provide many of our most common language experiences. (1942)[3]

> . . . the contemporary movie, is something to use as a starting point from which to move toward an appreciation of the best things that life and literature have to offer. (1934)[4]

Similar observations are being made today by some educators concerned with the scarcity of media programs in the schools, and although it took a long time building up, the "explosion of young filmmakers" has only been recently touched off. It is conservative to date most film programs in the schools within the last five years, even though high interest in teaching such programs has

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[1]David Mallery, Film in the Life of the School, National Association of Independent Schools (Boston, 1968), p. 22.

[2]Max J. Herzberg, "Cinema Syndrome," English Journal, February, 1946, p. 83.

[3]N.C.T.E., "Basic Aims for English Instruction in American Schools," English Journal, January, 1942, pp. 47-48.

[4]William Lewin, "The Business of Running a High School Movie Club," English Journal, January, 1934, p. 38.

existed for at least forty years. Until the mid-sixties, however, interest in the motion picture as an integral part of a liberal arts education was spotty--it was studied in some colleges and universities, and occasionally in the public schools, wherever film enthusiasts took the initiative to teach it.

The Young Filmmaker's "Explosion"

Why has film activity in the schools only recently "exploded"? Several reasons may be suggested: today's child has grown up in a media environment, new and inexpensive film equipment, such as Super 8, have just come onto the market and are easily acquired, and teachers are looking for alternatives to the traditional school curriculum. Whatever the reasons, many teachers and children today are looking at many, many films and making them too. It seems to have happened overnight; a small revolution of young people shooting film.

The student filmmaking movement emerged from underground and first became visible to the public in February of 1967 on the occasion of the first Young Filmmakers Conference organized by the National Film Study Project at Fordham University, under the leadership of John M. Culkin, S.J. Even though it was announced only 90 days in advance, it took the form of a groundswell, drawing 1,200 people, 740 of them student filmmakers or students interested in making films. Publicized as a program for "The Kids Who Make Films and the Films They Make," the "kids" entered 120 films for consideration on a few weeks notice. They arrived from all over the country and Canada, motivated by their own intense interest in films. A 13-year old wrote ahead and asked,

"I make films, but there is no one to help me. Can I come without a teacher?"[5]

The conference brought together professional film people, young filmmakers and films. In discussion groups and viewing sessions, students were able to discuss films with such individuals as Frank Perry (David and Lisa), George Stevens, Jr. (Director, American Film Institute), actors Eli Wallach and Maurice Evans, experimental filmmaker Stan Vanderbeck and even Marshall McLuhan.

Centers of Screen Education

The most significant group of participants for a survey of film study, however, would be the teachers who attended. They represented the centers of interest and activity in screen education in the country at that time. Some came from private and independent schools, others from public schools or university laboratory schools: David Powell of North Reading High School, Massachusetts; Rodney Sheratsky of Northern Regional High School, Demarest, New Jersey; Tony Hodgkinson of Boston University; Rodger Larson, University Settlement Film Club in New York; George Bouwman of Horace Mann School in the Bronx and also of New York University; Yvonne Anderson, Yellow Ball Workshop in Lexington, Massachusetts.[6]

These teachers have been particularly instrumental in the

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[5]Anthony Schillaci and John Culkin (eds.), Films Deliver (New York, 1970), p. 189.

[6]Mallery, op. cit., p. 23.

development of screen education. They are responsible for many of the programs which have attempted to incorporate film into the life of the school and fill the void of film study in American education which until the mid-sixties did not offer one high school program or set of published materials that could serve as a curricular model for educators interested in creating serious and systematic film study units.[7]

For example, during the two school years 1967-1969, the Office of Education (Bureau of Research) funded a screen education demonstration and research project in the junior and senior high schools of North Reading, Massachusetts, under the direction of Anthony Hodgkinson of Boston University. His concern for this lack of any systematic approach to the teaching of film in American public schools was the impetus for the project.

> Although there has accumulated, especially in the last decade, a great deal of literature and some films descriptive of various lessons and courses in screen education in the United States, Canada, Europe, and Australia, opportunities have been very few for the kind of continuous, day-to-day, integrated teaching in a public school situation this project offered.[8]

The project involved four teachers, a director, David Powell, two research assistants and 419 students--the most ambitious program in secondary screen education to date. In addition to providing a continuing opportunity for observers to attend lessons, watch the development of the students and units,

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[7]Stuart Selby, "The Study of Film as an Art Form in American Secondary Schools" (unpublished Doctoral thesis, Columbia University, 1963).

[8]Anthony Hodgkinson, "A Descriptive Report: North Reading Screen Education Project," Office of Education (Washington, D. C., 1970), p. 2.

and discuss and evaluate it with them and the project staff, it provided something no other screen education project had been able to do thus far. The formal report on the project, "A Descriptive Report: North Reading Screen Education Project" afforded a detailed description of units, activities, evaluative tools and their results, student responses, and suggestions for future programs. This study was the first of its kind to make such a meaty contribution to the literature of film study, a classroom-tested program which could serve as a model for interested teachers. Moreover, a strong indication of the possibilities for screen education at the elementary level emerged from the final assessment of the project. It became clear that the most progress was achieved with the youngest classes which reached down to the sixth grade with an experimental course.[9]

Other programs, more limited in scope, sought the services of a professional, filmmaker-in-residence. Horace Mann School in New York, perhaps the first secondary school in the United States to offer courses in film production on a continuing basis and for credit, enlisted the aid of George Bouwman, teacher and filmmaker, to develop a program that has helped young filmmakers create prize-winning films. Rodney Sheratsky, film educator and leader in the field of media studies, was aided by filmmaker Eric Camiel to teach students at the Northern Valley Regional High School in Demarest, New Jersey. In Washington, D. C., St. Albans School enlisted the guidance of filmmaker Albert Ihde as a consultant

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[9] Ibid., p. 55.

for classes in film study and filmmaking, and a resource guide for the school in developing a long-range program in screen education.[10]

These examples serve to demonstrate the pattern that film education followed in the mid- and late sixties: interested teachers, administrators or schools offered courses in film study and filmmaking, often enlisting the aid of a professional filmmaker from a nearby college or university. More widespread today, screen education in the secondary schools still follows this basic pattern.

Certain film teachers have attempted to expand this pattern and encourage wider media programs which would encompass entire school systems and states. One such notable is John Culkin, Director of the Center for Understanding Media at Fordham University in New York. Culkin's dissertation for a Ph.D. in education at Harvard was a 30-hour film study program for high school students. In a sense, he has expanded that project to encompass the most extensive program of media study in the country and has emerged as the "Pied Piper" of the film movement at the secondary level.[11]

The Center's program is varied and approaches media education from many directions: courses in film and filmmaking at Fordham University; a Young Director's Center which distributes films made by young people, encourages filmmaking by securing

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[10] Mallery, op. cit., pp. 25-26.

[11] John Culkin, Film Study in the High School (Washington, D. C., 1966), p. 1.

funds for further experimentation by young directors, and creates an audience for the work of young filmmakers; teacher training and a graduate degree program in film/media accredited by the Antioch Graduate School of Education; parent education to improve communication between parents and children funded by the Edward E. Ford Foundation; the Metropolitan Area Film Instructors Association, the largest regional film/media teacher's organization in the country; and numerous research projects and publications dealing with media education.[12]

Only recently has Father Culkin directed his energies toward film study in the elementary school, but the resulting programs are the most sweeping attempt thus far to bring film into the elementary school classroom on a widespread basis. Under a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, and the U.S. Office of Education, three pilot sites for film study and filmmaking have been set up in elementary schools in the states of Alaska, Nebraska, and Arkansas. Teachers from this trio of states studied at Culkin's center during the summer of 1971. During the school year they were assisted by the presence of live action and animation filmmakers who will serve as artists-in-residence to the program. Emphasis will be on the screening, discussion and analysis of short films and on an introduction to student filmmaking. It is the first national film project to focus on the elementary schools.[13]

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[12]John Culkin, "Doing the Truth," K-Eight, January-February, 1972, p. 11.

[13]Ibid.

Venturing into the realm of curriculum design with the assistance of the Ford Foundation, the Center trained a cadre of teachers from the public schools in Mamaroneck, New York, to develop curricular models in media study for grades K-12. The teachers worked with a variety of projects in media analysis, filmmaking, video-taping, audio-taping and multi-media. The project resulted in a series of curriculum designs and multi-media learning kits.

Operating on the principle that film study requires film teachers, and in response to the growing constituency of teachers who realize they both need and want a degree of competency in media analysis and media-making, the Center began a summer training program in 1972 designed exclusively to meet the needs of K-8 teachers.[14]

The recent interest of the Center for Understanding Media in elementary film education typifies the manner in which most programs have developed: a sifting of resources, leadership and funds from the secondary level down to children 12 and under. Almost without exception, film study has developed in elementary schools when preceded by programs in affiliated high schools and colleges.

A few individuals must be named at this point, not only because they offer an exception to this generalization because of their early work with elementary school children and film, but because they have offered leadership in this new interest area

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[14] Ibid.

through their activities and publications.

Yvonne Anderson has been making films with young children in a private workshop for ten years. She serves as consultant for the new media programs for the Center for Understanding Media, has published many articles and two books describing her work with children and offering guidelines for teachers interested in film-making. John Culkin comments on the films her children create:

> Some of the most inspired and refreshing work is being done in animation by the five to fifteen-year olds working with Yvonne Anderson at the Yellow Ball Workshop in Lexington, Massachusetts. Johas Mekas describes their work: "Without any exaggeration these 40 minutes (approximately 20 short films, each from 30 seconds to four minutes) are about the best animated films made anywhere today . . . . These children's films demonstrate that there are no uninteresting subjects: there are only bad washed-out artists."[15]

Perhaps this teacher's greatest contribution to the growth of film study in the elementary school is her demonstration of the fact that children from the ages of five to twelve can produce beautiful and imaginative films. There seems little doubt today that children want to make films. Yvonne Anderson proves that they can. And the films her children have made over the years have won critical acclaim, prizes at international film festivals, nationwide television coverage and commercial distribution for a mass audience. This is not to suggest that an objective of screen education should be the production of prize-winning films or even the production of films at all, which implies the tyranny of a product value approach over the process values. It merely demonstrates that children are capable of making films, and

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[15] John Culkin, "The Young in Search of Identity," New York Times, February 4, 1968.

capable of making films of a very high calibre indeed.

Not as well known but similarly engaged with children and film, Marjorie Lenk directs the Cellar Door Cinema, a private art school in Lexington, Massachusetts, which has produced live-action, pixillated and animated films, all of which have received some recognition from film festivals and network television. In 1971 the school produced a 20-minute film of documentary and short animated films called CELLAR DOOR CINE MITES. This collection of films further confirms the expertise children can exercise as filmmakers.[16]

In addition to developing wherever there are enthusiastic teachers or administrators, or where screen education has gained a foothold in nearby secondary schools or colleges, media programs may be observed in the inner-city, using film with the disadvantaged. Rodger Larson has been working in 16mm with teen-agers in Harlem, the Bronx, and the Lower East Side. The Brooks Foundation has developed a format for getting professional filmmakers to work with young people to make films in the cities. Philadelphia's Parkway Program has encouraged drop-out potentials in high school to choose their own program, form a curriculum and become involved with films and filmmaking.[17]

At the elementary level, many inner-city schools have used photography and filming to encourage children to verbalize and communicate about their environment with their peers and their

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[16] Marjorie Lenk, "Kids Make Films: Cellar Door Cinema," Filmmakers Newsletter, January, 1972, p. 25.

[17] John Culkin, "The Young in Search of Identity."

teachers. William Flinn, principal of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary School of Schenectady, New York, describes his school's objective for the use of a visual literacy program involving photography and filmmaking. "The major objective is to break the failure, rejection, illiteracy cycle of elementary school pupils in this urban disadvantaged area."[18] He cites five components of this objective:

1. Improved ability to communicate.
2. Improved self-image.
3. Positive relationship to the school enterprise.
4. Accelerated intercultural understandings.
5. Creation of more appropriate curricular materials.

Some activities the school used to fulfill these objectives were photographic and filming field trips in the community, putting pictures in sequences, discussing them, writing stories and other language experience approach activities, and the creation of films by older children.[19]

It seems the visual media offer myriad possibilities for the improvement of the linguistically different child's ability to communicate. Perhaps this explains the preponderance of film programs in the inner-city, as compared to suburban areas--teachers have found an effective means to interest the inner-city child in his environment, school and learning.

For example, the Bank Street College Early Childhood Center's After School Program used film with inner-city children

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[18]Clarence M. Williams and John L. Debes (eds.), Proceedings of the First National Conference on Visual Literacy (New York, 1970), p. 167.

[19]Ibid.

to attempt to shift their negative feelings about themselves and school to positive ones, to build their self-image, to help them observe their confusing environment and clarify their ideas about it, to develop their language and thinking powers, and to become more effective learners. Roberta Harris, director of this project, comments on the results of their first year's activity:

> As we had suspected, the camera turned out to be an excellent tool. It served not as an end in itself, but rather as a means to help "open-up" the children and give them a "non-verbal," "non-threatening" means to begin to perceive themselves in relation to their world: a means to look again, observe, question, differentiate, clarify, and in the broadest sense become effective learners.[20]

One of the newest programs aimed at integrating film into the inner-city elementary school is the Urban Gateways Filmmaking Workshop in Chicago, funded by the National Endowment for the Arts. Directed by a professional filmmaker, Stephen Bezark, Urban Gateways is a pilot project whose purpose is to "educate teachers in the basic concepts and skills of filmmaking and film aesthetics and enable them to teach students to use the film medium as a form of self-expression and as a creative discipline."[21] Interested teachers are invited to join workshops where they will learn how to use movie cameras to make films with their classes, and become informed of activities relating to film education: conferences, books, publications, organizations, etc. After completing this five-week training period, the program supplies each

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[20]Robie H. Harris, "Child's Eye View," K-Eight, January-February, 1972, p. 15.

[21]Stephan Bezark, "The Urban Gateways Filmmaking Workshop for Elementary Grade School Teachers" (unpublished report, Chicago, 1972).

teacher with the necessary equipment and supplies to implement what she or he has learned in the workshop. In its second year, and with renewed funds, the program is evaluated by its director:

> The response to this program has been extraordinary. Teachers in the workshops report that other teachers in their schools want to learn film; principals in some schools have readily agreed to purchase additional equipment. Most important, the students have become excited about making films. Teachers report that in a very short time, positive behavioral and learning changes have occurred as a direct result of the introduction of film in the classroom.[22]

The Urban Gateways approach to screen education in the inner-city is through teacher training and in-service programs for prospective teachers of film study and filmmaking in the elementary schools. This method of introducing film into the curriculum has been used in other public school settings. And in view of the fact that most film teaching today is carried on by interested, but often isolated, individual teachers in a school which may or may not provide that teacher with equipment, materials, class time or support, teacher training may be a most effective way of introducing film into the curriculum, developing programs and materials, and evaluating the results of screen education in the elementary schools. J.M.L. Peters, a pioneer in film study in Great Britain, underscores the singular importance of the teacher of film in the past by observing that ". . . there are many individual teachers who are already putting into practice the ideas mentioned . . . even though film teaching may not yet have been formally allowed any place on their school time-tables."[23]

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[22] Ibid.

[23] J.M.L. Peters, Teaching About the Film (New York, 1961).

In an extensive study of screen education for UNESCO, Anthony Hodgkinson attempts to clarify the peculiar nature of screen education and the special importance the teacher holds in the total picture:

> What seems to me far more significant than theories about the incorporation of the subject in the syllabus is the fact that those who today teach screen education come from no single discipline; they include teachers whose specialist training ranges from mathematics to art, from literature to science, from geography to religious education. The unifying principles (respect for children, respect for the screen) cut right across specialist interest.[24]

It appears then, that most film teaching centers around interested teachers. It has also become apparent that few of these teachers have had special training in screen education. What opportunities exist for teacher education in film for the experienced teacher or the prospective film teacher? And what programs are our colleges and universities offering to undergraduates in education to facilitate the teaching of the media?

Teacher Preparation for Screen Education

American colleges and universities follow two main approaches to the study of the mass media: Departments of Education equip new teachers with audio-visual skills and knowledge, and Departments of Speech, Drama, Communication or Art prepare students for professional careers in the new media. There is little indication, however, that institutions of higher learning are preparing to assume leadership in the teaching of film to teachers, particularly at the elementary level. In a comparative

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[24]Anthony Hodgkinson, Screen Education: Teaching a Critical Approach to Cinema and Television (Paris, 1965), p. 29.

study of screen education among several countries, Anthony Hodgkinson suggests that:

> The American situation seems to be mirrored in other countries, where the high standard of professional training--especially for the film profession--does not necessarily imply that a well-developed pattern for the teaching of film and TV appreciation exists within the educational facilities for the training of teachers.[25]

There is a trend among American colleges and universities to offer an increasing number of courses in film, especially in the undergraduate liberal arts curriculum. But not all colleges teach film courses of any kind, whether they are audio-visual training, professional film production, film appreciation, history of film, or film theory and aesthetics, nor do they give it the same recognition and treatment as other areas of inquiry in formal education when they do have such course offerings. But whatever the qualitative differences between the teaching of film and another subject in the humanities, English for example, there is a quantitative difference in film study courses taught in colleges in the last few decades.

For example, the period from 1952-53 to 1964-65 showed a significant increase in the number of film courses taught in the 100 largest colleges and universities, jumping from 575 in the earlier period to 846 in the later period, an increase of 271 courses. It might be interesting, however, to compare this number with the increase of courses taught in other liberal arts subjects for the same period of time, history or English for example.[26]

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[25] Ibid., p. 74.

[26] David C. Stewart, Film Study in Higher Education (Washington, D. C., 1966), p. 166.

It is interesting to note that education departments lead all others in total courses offered (264 of 846), but one must keep in mind the singular emphasis on audio-visual instruction in education departments, and by all other departments for that matter. The number of courses in several different content areas out of a total of 846 courses are as follows: audio-visual, 286; production, 276; history, criticism and appreciation, 152; and communication, 132. If one looks at a comparison of departments offering courses in film history, criticism, and appreciation, courses more relevant to acquiring a fundamental knowledge of film and therefore more relevant to the teaching of film as an art form and a means of communication, education departments rank seventh behind the following departments:

Department	Number of Courses in Film History, Criticism, and Appreciation
Theatre arts, etc.	58
Radio and television	30
Communication(s), etc.	22
Journalism	15
Motion pictures	11
Fine arts	6
Education	3
English	2
Photography, etc.	2
Music	2
	152

The emphasis in education departments, then, is on the use of film in audio-visual education.[27]

It should also be noted that the number of film courses is not distributed evenly among colleges and universities across the country. Of the 846 film courses taught in 1963-64, 122 were

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[27] Ibid., p. 167.

taught at two universities: 62 at the University of Southern California and 60 at the University of California. Seventy-seven of the 100 largest colleges and universities taught fewer than 10 courses.[28]

Impossible to quantify but interesting to consider is the question of whether or not this increase in film courses in colleges is in proportion to the interest and enthusiasm generated by film today among young people. Or, has film study in formal education kept pace with the importance of film in our culture? It seems it has not.

But while film is still wriggling on a pin under the scrutinizing gaze of academicians debating its worthiness for entrance into the arena of formal education, its a "basic study" in informal college education. Film societies are an important feature on most college campuses. There are more than four thousand film societies in the United States, at least one on every college campus.[29] (Historical note: John Culkin believes the first film society in America was formed at his alma mater, Woodstock College, a Jesuit theologate in Maryland. Unknown to college administrators, it may have been a secret society.)[30]

Even if a college does not offer formal courses in film, students have the opportunity to view films of all types and discuss them with other film viewers. And these programs can lend

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[28] Ibid., p. 166.

[29] Ibid., p. 7.

[30] John M. Culkin, Film Study in the High School, p. 29.

support to formal classes in film by stimulating interest in film and widening a student's exposure to the liveliest art. Some film teachers, scowling at attempts to "formalize" film education, even suggest that the most qualified film teacher at Northern Regional High School in New Jersey and leading spokesman for the film movement in secondary schools, advises teachers on their qualifications to teach film:

> Unless you've seen and thought about films for many years, you cannot qualify to teach them to students. Talk about them, yes. Teach them, no. Nor do you qualify if your serious consideration of films ended with one college course in film. You must be enthusiastic about film and your enthusiasm must lead you to see many films--the popular commercial films as well as the underground movies.[31]

This attitude is much more relevant for the secondary school film teacher who will be dealing with the content, style and historical role of adult feature films than it is to the elementary school teacher who can teach film study with short art films, or who may venture into elementary filmmaking. Just as it is not necessary for an elementary school teacher to have a major in English to teach language arts, it is not necessary for him or her to have a broad knowledge of the history, content or grammar of the feature film in order to teach children in relationship to the screen.

Sheratsky's advice has more relevance for elementary school teachers at the attitudinal level; they should teach film only if they are film enthusiasts and it seems unrealistic to expect they will be unless they have been active film viewers.

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[31]Rodney E. Sheratsky, "Film: The Reality of Being," N.C.T.E. (Champaign, Illinois, 1969), p. 9.

This expectation can be fulfilled at many colleges and universities, then, by the film society even if the college does not offer formal film courses. Indeed, Sheratsky suggests that an over-formalized curricular approach to teaching film at the college level may create film teacher Frankensteins, the teacher who realizes the "relevance" of film to today's youth, takes a film course in college, and begins reeling off films in the classroom without the proper respect for the films or the children. He warns:

> Another point; don't teach film because you want to make your reputation in virgin educational territory. If you're an opportunist, ruin virgins in non-educational fields. Education no longer can afford to give you any more of its territory to play around in.[32]

This debate among film educators over the respective merits of a scholarly versus an organic approach to film study will doubtless continue, and whether or not teacher training is the sine qua non of film education in the future, it seems unrealistic to assume that film will ever be an integral part of the elementary school program unless colleges and universities, particularly teacher training institutions, recognize its possibilities, develop philosophies and courses for its instruction, and assume a leadership role in the area of curriculum development.

Film study in the American elementary school, then, is a loose network of film teachers scattered among public schools, inner-city programs, art workshops and several college affiliated

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[32] Ibid.

programs. Originating at the secondary level and with little help from the educational establishment, the film study movement in elementary schools is new enough to be difficult to evaluate and even difficult to describe due to the recentness of many of its programs, some only a year or two old, some born only this year.

The literature on film education does, however, reveal a characteristic common among all the film teachers directing these new programs that may have more to do with the shaping of the future of film study than any other factor: the respect they share for the excitement, beauty and depth of meaning of the contemporary film and the special meaning it can hold for today's child.

CHAPTER V

AN EXPERIMENTAL FILM STUDY AND FILMMAKING UNIT, GRADES 3-6

The general purpose of this unit was to introduce short art films to a small group of children, encourage discussion and critical analysis of these films, and use this film study activity as a springboard for filmmaking. I believed that exposure to fine films and a wide range of cinematic techniques would motivate children to make their own films and encourage them to try a new film technique, to express and communicate, perhaps one they had not seen before or at least one that diverged from the usual linear-live action form most commercial films take.

Fourteen children (twelve girls and two boys) from the Ames Laboratory School at the University of Wisconsin, River Falls, participated in this class. They ranged in age from 8 to 12 years and were in grades 4-6. The group met on Thursday and Friday afternoons from 1:00 to 3:00 for 10 weeks, a total of 40 hours.

The class was structured as a workshop/studio. The children could choose to film independently or in small groups. They worked at their own pace. The only limitation on their plans was the necessity of sharing the equipment: camera, tripod, and lights. But since the time spent actually filming is less than a combination of other activities such as script writing, making properties or setting up shots, this did not pose a major problem.

No restrictions were placed on the type of film the

children chose to make, how they chose to make it, how much film they used, or who they worked with. The thrust of the unit was to expose children to fine films which demonstrated a variety of cinema techniques, stimulate their critical powers of evaluation and ability to analyze their own feelings about film, help them acquire the basic skills of beginning filmmaking, and encourage them to create something new and beautiful and meaningful to them--a film.

The unit was divided into two parts: film study and filmmaking. The shorter film study unit preceded filmmaking.

Film Study - 2 weeks

Criteria for Choosing Films

1. The films were to be short art films and original to the film form (not a re-telling of a children's story or an informational film).

2. The films were to represent as many different film types and techniques as possible. Every attempt was made to find good films that represented the following techniques:

a) Live action/narrative
b) Pixillation
c) Pixillation/animation
d) Impressionistic
e) Collage
f) Kinestasis
g) Draw-on
h) Documentary

(Note: Many films used a combination of two or more of these techniques. See Appendix for explanation of film types and their combinations.)

3. The films were to be available to classroom teachers

in the Twin Cities area. Consideration was made of rental fee and availability of sources.

4. The films were to be suitable and interesting for children in grades 3-6.

Filmography (See Appendix for film descriptions.)

Film titles and techniques.

Rainshower - impressionistic (live action).

The Dragon's Tears - pixillation/animation.

Clay - pixillation.

Begone Dull Care - draw on.

The Champion - live action/narrative (Charlie Chaplin).

Winter of the Witch - live action/narrative.

Fiddle de Dee - draw-on.

American Time Capsule - kinestasis.

Moods of Surfing - impressionistic/live action.

Laffing Gas - live action/narrative (Charlie Chaplin).

Film Study Procedure

Jean Paul Sartre maintains that the greatest sin is to turn what is concrete into an abstraction. This seems no more apt than in a discussion of film study. It is certain that many teachers attempting to use film in the classroom will be uneasy about what to do when the lights go on after a film has been shown. Long conditioned by verbal disciplines, they may attempt to force generalizations and definitions out of a film discussion even though this may not be the best way to deal with film--a visual, kinetic and perhaps more elusive medium than literature.

Borrowing an idea from Richard Lacey, film teacher in the school of Education at the University of Massachusetts, I approached discussions of the films with a device called the "image-sound skim."[1] This is how it works. Each student was asked to mention a visual image or a sound that comes to mind from the film. It was hoped that this would encourage the children to share their feelings and communicate their ideas without fear of being wrong. It was also hoped they would think in terms of the film itself, the visuals and sound, rather than make an attempt to "abstract" the film, try to figure out what it "symbolized," and create a response they felt the teacher might be looking for, the "deep inner meaning" of the film.

This is not to suggest that films do not use symbols or embody abstract meanings. Anyone who has ever seen a Bergman film knows that they do (which is not the same thing as saying they know what they mean). But most film educators theorize that a proper analysis of a film should not begin with those concepts.

The main purpose of the image-sound skim was to allow the children to re-orchestrate the movie by prompting each other's memory of the images and sounds of the film, learning how others perceive, and gathering enough concrete information about the film to give them the insight for deeper exploration. Richard Lacey describes the results of image-sound skim discussions:

What emerges instead is a gradually richer set of

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[1]Richard Lacey, "Whatdaya Do When the Lights Go On?," Media and Methods, November, 1969, p. 38.

> relationships among images, sounds and implied ideas. In this way the art of the film, instead of being killed by excessive analysis, has a fair chance to continue working on the audience. Rhythms, details of setting, mood, counterpoints, transitions, color and lighting subtly affect the processes by which students recall images and sounds . . . . What matters is the sensibility--the perceptions on which verbalizations are based.[2]

The ten films used in this film study unit were discussed with the image-sound skim device. After a brief introduction to each film identifying the film's type, and a viewing of the film, the children were encouraged to discuss the film in terms of the things they saw and heard and felt. An illustration of this type of discussion is the children's responses to the film Rainshower, an impressionistic study of the birth, life and death of a summer storm.

The film opened with a shot of the filmmaker carrying his camera through a forest and across a field. He explained that he had been waiting for a rainshower so that he could capture it on film. No more dialogue is used. Music accompanies the visuals. The film used a variety of techniques and focused on many details in the country and the city during the storm. Here are the children's responses to it, their "image-sound skim":

- I felt wet; I felt like wiping my face.
- I liked the way the film showed clouds reflected in a window. (This led to a discussion of other ways the filmmaker used the reflection technique, in ponds and puddles.)
- I saw the day get darker and lighter because of the clouds moving, but I didn't actually see the clouds--just the shadows.

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[2] Ibid.

- I saw each raindrop on the leaves.

- It was different than films you usually see in school; more interesting; less talking; it didn't need talking; I liked it better.

- You don't always need words to express your ideas; you can use pictures and sound too and it might even show your idea better.

- The water made rhythm like music.

- The music fit the pictures and their feeling.

- The film could have ended differently. (Several children made suggestions and analogies with other films that end in different ways to achieve a certain feeling, and mentioned that some movies leave you with a question at the end.)

A similar viewing-discussion (image-sound skim procedure) was used for the other nine films.

Filmmaking

Materials for Filmmaking

1. Film folder.

Each child received a folder with pockets to hold his written materials for filmmaking: (see Appendix)

story board forms for script writing
film review forms
a schedule of children's films at local theatres and on television (this was updated later)
a small "idea" note pad

2. Filmmaking equipment.

1 Bauer Super 8 camera (with cable release for pixillation)
1 tripod
2 photoflood 500 watt bulbs
2 adjustable clamps to hold bulbs (these could be attached to the backs of chairs and avoid the expense of light stands)
1 Super 8 movie projector
1 screen
1 16 mm. projector, manual thread (for draw-on films)

1 editor
1 Craig master splicer
1 bottle splicing cement

Film.

Kodachrome II Super 8 movie film
16 mm. clear leader (for draw-on films)

Other materials.

Butcher paper
Colored paper
Marking pens, colored inks, scissors, glue
Poster paper
Found objects

Filmmaking Procedure

The four initial two-hour film study lessons were partially intended to act as a springboard for filmmaking. The children, however, began springing before the first film was shown. Indeed, they sprang at me as I walked in the door the first day with such indelicate questions as: "Are you going to let us make a movie" When do we start?" Filmmaking "began," then, with the film study in the sense that the children were already thinking in terms of a film they themselves would make. Indeed, many "how-to" questions regarding film techniques interspersed their comments during the entire film study period. They simply could not wait to begin filmmaking.

Needless to say, it was not necessary to "motivate" filmmaking activities in the usual sense of the word. By the end of the first of the four two-hour sessions planned for film study, the children had several concrete ideas for filmmaking which were discussed. Some of these early ideas were:

- a horror movie (standard suggestion)

- a movie about freedom (running horses, cars and original music these two girls had already written)
- macrame a movie (this presented some rather knotty problems)
- pixillation (this technique was very popular)

Even though these ideas were suggested spontaneously and were quite vague and amorphous, all of them eventually developed into a film in one way or another, as did all the other early ideas the class suggested off the top of their heads.

This seems to suggest the great possibilities filmmaking offers as an activity to stimulate creativity. Filmmaking may be the most direct means of materializing a child's imaginative visions, fantasies, and day dreams--"This pulsing stream of inconsequential thought and feeling" Hughes Mearns believes is the source of creative activity.[3] This can be particularly true for the culturally disadvantaged child, the slow learner, or simply the less verbal student.

It seems so often that teachers do not possess a medium magical enough to match some of the creative imaginings of children: They have an image of a giant and we give them an 8½ x 11 piece of paper and pencil and tell them to write a story or they imagine a flight through space to another planet inhabited by green creatures and we give them manila paper and green crayon and tell them to draw a picture. They need a Merlin--we must appear as Mordred. This is not to suggest that creative writing or art activities cannot fully express a child's imaginative

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[3]Hughes Mearns, Creative Power (New York, 1958), p. 6.

fantasies. Of course they can. But there are times when a vital, dynamic, visual, and auditory form would best suit their content--in a word, film.

Children are quite literally able to materialize their simplest, natural feelings or their wildest day dreams on film. Little is beyond the powerful magic of the movie camera. What children feel or imagine or "see" can come alive on the movie screen. Film allows children to "see feelingly" and share what they see with others, communicate. Danny Swensen, age 10, puts it this way: "Film is like your grandma's preserved pears. Film preserves memories. Film will show things you are proud of."

Basic Steps in Filmmaking

1. Idea sharing, brainstorming.

As mentioned before, no motivation or lead-in was necessary for the filmmaking activities. The children provided their own. Film study, however, provided a framework for filmmaking. Indeed, film study is an essential step in filmmaking to put cinema form and content in the proper perspective. British screen educator Don Waters cautions:

> Tear filmmaking out of its proper context of film study--screen education--then you starve its roots and it will certainly not flourish as it might. This is what is wrong with many a school made film. Excited by the general educational value of filmmaking, teachers sometimes plunge in without adequate preparation. The results are invariably shoddy, unsatisfying to audiences and disillusioning to the young filmmaker.[4]

Another purpose of film study was to introduce the

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[4]Don Waters, Creative Approach in Times Educational Supplement (London, February 8, 1963).

children to a variety of filmmaking techniques. The results of this objective were apparent. All but one of the eight films this group made used a technique other than the most common--live-action with a story. And the one that did used some special effects (a witch appears out of thin air, a "pop-in") and some very nice camera work.

Motivation aside, then, the first real step taken with this class toward filmmaking was idea-sharing and some brain-storming--children in small groups exchanging ideas as fast as they could think of them without regard for their practicality, a method suggested by S.J. Parnes and others which I have found very effective to use to stimulate children's ideas for film-making.[5]

Many of the children had some idea of what they wanted to film from the very beginning, and a few had very definite ideas that they followed through with a finished film.

This initial idea stimulation period seemed to jell when one such child brought in a written plan for her film and the props she intended to use--a small teddy bear and a hand woven tapestry. After a short explanation of her ideas, we tried them out in action, discussed technical problems and possibilities, and used the camera to see how they would appear. Kathy Nottingham had an intuitive grasp of the film form which seemed to stimulate the other children. Here is her very simple outline, written outside of class, before she'd been introduced to a story board

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[5]S.J. Parnes, A Source Book for Creative Thinking (New York, 1962), pp. 285-286.

form:

1. Title--with rolled rug at bottom of picture (THE RUG)
2. Bear rolls rug out--bottom to top
3. Bear moves back to bright red
4. Ends of tapestry come crawling into picture
5. Ends move over bear
6. Rug rolls by itself rolling over bear
7. Rug rolls out of picture with bear inside

The only change Kathy made in this early plan was to add a close up of the bear's face between scenes 4 and 5. She decided she needed to establish some feeling and sympathy for the bear and chose to do it with a close up, very powerful film language, and a wise addition.

Kathy's early start on her film, and the demonstration of what could actually be done with props and a camera led to a short but intense period of exchanging ideas and planning which in turn led to writing scripts, the next step in student filmmaking.

2. Scripts/Story Boards.

The young filmmaker does not usually write a formal script since a script is dialogue and he or she will most likely be making a silent Super 8 film, rather than using the much more costly 16 mm film which has a sound track. Sound can be added with a tape recording, but this does not require a detailed written script in the early stages of filmmaking.

This group used simple story board forms instead. These are merely mimeoed papers with three or four large empty squares

on one side of the sheet. The filmmaker can draw his visuals in these squares and write shooting directions, technical notes, description, dialogue, or whatever will help him plan, next to it. The scenes must be in order as a guide to shooting them in sequence.

There was a great range of individual differences among the story boards in this group: some were a few words in each frame, others used only visuals, and some were extremely detailed, both in visuals and verbals. It is interesting to note that the quality and maturity of the story boards--essentially a verbal product--did not seem to correlate particularly with the finished film. The "poorest" story board resulted in a film that was beautifully executed. The story board was merely a few words--names of buildings on the campus at River Falls--jotted on the story board paper. The film, however, an impressionistic documentary of the college campus, was beautifully conceived and faultlessly executed with a minimum of technical advice, by a fifth grade boy. His lack of ability or motivation to write out a clear and detailed plan did not prevent him from creating a lovely film--his visual expression did not depend on his verbal expression.

3. Gathering Properties.

Properties, backgrounds and sets were kept at a minimum for this filmmaking class. The children used whatever art materials they needed from school supplies (butcher paper, colored paper, paint, glue, scissors, etc.). Only one film needed costumes and a witch suit and dog outfit from Halloween did very

nicely. Since most of the children used the pixillation technique for their films, filming objects or people one frame at a time and moving them between frames to give the illusioned "life" to inanimate objects, elaborate sets, backgrounds and costumes were not needed. Some things we found particularly adaptable to this technique were stuffed animals (two of the films used them), clay or Play-Doh (this can take any shape, metamorphosize, etc.), and yarn. The children brought these things from home, but any teacher could keep them on hand for filmmaking.

In addition, he or she might keep a supply of marking pens (of good quality) and some of the new colored inks designed for drawing on clear film leader. Animation layouts can be done with any paper available in school supplies.

4. Learning to Use the Equipment.

Since most of the children in this class were making their own films, it was necessary for all of them to learn to use the filming equipment. If a class were making a film as a group, this job could be delegated to a few children for practical purposes, and the others could acquire filming skills as the work progressed.

Learning to use a camera is strictly a "learning by doing" affair. It seems that no amount of teacher presentation to the group replaces the chance for the children to actually handle and use the camera. For this reason, I only demonstrate the camera to the group for two reasons: (1) to acquaint them with the general features of the camera, their names, and basic handling and (2) to stress the importance of certain safety features such as

keeping the lens cover on to prevent scratching the lens, attaching the camera securely to the tripod, and preventing the remotest possibility of dropping the camera (any or all of these accidents could ruin a movie camera).

After this initial introduction to the camera, the children learned to use it while actually making the film. Because of high interest and necessity in this situation, they learned to do it very well.

As with any new skill, the class exhibited a wide range of individual differences. Some had complete command of the camera after their first filming experience. Some never fully mastered all the aspects and subtleties of camera work even though they were able to complete a successful film, just as children with poor handwriting and spelling skills can still write fine stories.

5. The Shooting.

The initial filmmaking periods of forming ideas, writing story boards, gathering properties and learning to use the equipment are followed by a period of intense and exciting activity--the shooting. The shooting means lights, camera and action--a lot of action both in front and behind the camera. Any young filmmaker must carefully plan every move he or she makes, and must make decisions constantly.

It is not possible to erase a filmmaking mistake and not practical to do it over. The children learn quickly that the best policy is careful planning.

This begins with the film's inception in the child's mind,

continues with the story boards and the time they spend making properties, but is no more evident than during the actual shooting. Filming is not hard but it is precise. But children meet this challenge easily. They really want to make films.

Here is a simple and general outline of the steps used by this class to film a shot:

a. Set up backgrounds and properties: If the children were filming a pixillation sequence, they prepared a background for the objects to be pixillated that would fill the frame. They also had to position their objects and make arrangements for them to stand, sit, or whatever position they were to hold while being filmed. Animation layouts were laid on the floor or a table. Live action scenes were set up on a location and the children arranged whatever properties--signs, props, actors, etc.--they needed.

b. Secured camera to tripod: It was better to do this inside, if filming outside, and carry the camera on the tripod. This was done at the beginning of the class and did not have to be done again.

c. Set up camera: This was the most technical procedure. It was necessary for the filmmaker to adjust the height, angle, and distance of the tripod to frame the shot properly. Then it was necessary to choose the proper distance in feet, to choose the correct distance, and finally to focus the camera. Any mistakes on any of these steps could have resulted in several types of failures: edges may have showed around a pixillation or animation scene, the camera may have

moved if not properly secured and caused a wobbly picture which produced a mild form of nausea in the viewer, or the picture may have been out of focus.

To prevent these failures, which can be very disappointing to young filmmakers, an attempt was made to check each camera set-up before filming. This became less urgent as the class progressed and the children became more competent, indeed began helping each other and checking out their set-ups. Suffice it to say that every foot of film shot during this ten week class was usable.

6. Editing.

Editing required patience, precision and fingernails. The children who made these films lacked only the latter. Despite its demands, this last step is so close to producing a final film that it was usually attacked with relish by young filmmakers.

Since there were so many different films made in this class and only one camera, each roll of film contained scenes from several movies. After the film was developed and viewed, the children began cutting out their own scenes. It was better to do this toward the end of the filmmaking period because the film was safer on the roll until the children were actually ready to edit the entire film, credits and all. Here are the basic steps used during the editing procedure:

a. Cut out scenes: Each child viewed the entire roll of film on a film editor, marked his or her own scene, and cut them out of the roll with scissors. It was best if all the children did each roll one at a time or the scenes could

be damaged if not claimed by their owners.

b. Editing bags: In lieu of an editing bin, each child had a large paper bag into which he or she dropped the lengths of film, attaching them by one end with a tiny bit of masking tape. This kept the film clean and prevented it from tearing or bending.

c. Ordered scenes: The children placed the scenes in the proper sequence by numbering the pieces of masking tape in order.

7. Splicing.

The Craig-Master splicer was used, a professional tool which forms a "wet" splice (using cement). Splicing tapes are available and advertised as ideal for the amateur but they make a rough splice of a very poor quality. It seemed worthwhile to teach the real splicing method because the results are superior and because children are real filmmakers.

After the children had demonstrated two good splices on old pieces of film, they were allowed to work on their own film. Some simple rules were devised to assist them in splicing, a very tricky task.

a. Keep the emulsion (dull) side up.

b. First scene is always on the right (this keeps the scenes in order).

c. The top of the picture is always on the right (this keeps the picture right side up).

d. Hold the film taut to keep it on the sprockets.

e. Scrape off all the emulsion.

f. Use very little glue (wipe the brush).

g. Replace glue bottle lid tightly (spilled glue could ruin an entire film on the editing table).

h. Let the splice dry one minute.

In addition to the directions that accompany the splicer, and numerous demonstrations by teacher and children, these rules helped keep the film in order and right side up, a very difficult thing to do with Super 8 film since it is much smaller than 16 mm and barely visible to the naked eye. It was very easy to insert a scene in the wrong direction.

Despite the difficulties, the children seemed to enjoy the splicing as much as they did using the camera.

CHAPTER VI

EVALUATION

Perhaps the most significant insight into an evaluation of this unit could be gained from a viewing of the children's films it produced. They demonstrate the level of technical proficiency the children attained, and more importantly they demonstrate the children's grasp of the special elements unique to the film form. Each film is very cinematic. And each film illustrates the ability of elementary school children to recognize, understand, appreciate and use the art and language of the film.

The basic objective of screen education is the production of finished films. But just as it is hoped that literature and language experiences will stimulate a child's creative writing, or art appreciation and visual experiences will stimulate his or her art activities, so can a study of film result in children's own films. It does require more time, money and effort to produce the latter, but that is a comment on the nature of the medium and not a suggestion of its relative worth. All the arts are worthwhile. Some are more difficult to produce.

Difficulties notwithstanding, the children in this class were highly motivated. They began that way, finished that way and remained that way in between. This could be attributed in part to the novelty of the idea of teaching filmmaking in an elementary school, but I believe it is more elementary even than that. It was the great appeal of films and the appeal of having the chance to create something they really liked and something that was

important to them--in this case, a film.

Film Study Evaluation

Two hour periods were too long for film study. The class was scheduled that way to facilitate ordering the films on a single date and because of the teacher's schedule, but it would have been much better to allow one hour periods and show no more than two films each time. This is how the films were actually shown:

Lesson 1	Lesson 2
Rainshower	Begone Dull Care
Dragon's Tears	The Champion
Clay	
Lesson 3	**Lesson 4**
Winter of the Witch	Moods of Surfing
Fiddle de Dee	Laffing Gas
American Time Capsule	

For example, the class became restive after seeing and discussing Rainshower and The Dragon's Tears. In addition, these activities had followed an initial discussion of what film is, how it is different from a book or a painting, and what happens inside when you see a film. The class picked up after the third film was shown, Clay, but it is an extremely lively and popular movie. They were restless again after we discussed it.

Despite this, interest in discussions was high. One child was extremely enthusiastic and led the discussions, but everyone in the group contributed ideas. Many of their comments about the films they had just seen were interspersed with questions about making a film themselves.

Furthermore, it was not necessary to show this many films to form a good foundation for film discussion or to introduce a variety of film techniques. Several of the films overlapped or duplicated techniques. For example Begone Dull Care and Fiddle de Dee are both draw-on films by Norman McLaren of the National Film Board of Canada. Rainshower and Moods of Surfing are both impressionistic films with a nature theme. The Champion and Laffing Gas are both early films by Charlie Chaplin. I chose to show these films in order to provide as rich a background as possible of film study, and to compare specific genre films, but it was not essential.

The film study period was also too condensed. It served to introduce new film techniques to the children very quickly so they could begin their own films. There was not sufficient time, however, to develop deeper understandings of the films or indeed, to fully enjoy them. There was time to show a few of them a second time, but it would be ideal to let the children have as many viewings as they wanted over a longer period of time.

Children's Film Poll

In order to encourage the children to evaluate the films they had seen and form an opinion about them, they were asked to put the films in rank order from favorite to least favorite immediately after they had seen them all.

After eight weeks of filmmaking, they were asked to order the films again, favorite to least favorite, without looking at their first polls. I suspected that they would change the order

in which they had first ranked the films due, in part, to the filmmaking experience. I hoped they would be able to explain their changes, to verbalize about them in terms of film.

First Poll	Second Poll
1. Winter of the Witch	1. The Champion
2. Clay	2. Winter of the Witch
3. Dragon's Tears	3. Dragon's Tears
4. The Champion	4. American Time Capsule
5. Moods of Surfing	5. Clay
6. Laffing Gas	6. Laffing Gas
7. American Time Capsule	7. Fiddle de Dee
8. Fiddle de Dee	8. Moods of Surfing and Rainshower
9. Rainshower	
10. Begone Dull Care	9. Begone Dull Care

There was a shift in the rank ordering of the films. This might be explained in several ways. Winter of the Witch, the most popular film in the first poll, followed the traditional live action/story pattern of most commercial films. It was the only one of the ten films not original to the film form--it is based on a book. So in addition to being a delightful film it was well within the children's range of experience. It was most like other films and most like a book. This might explain the film's popularity with the children.

The second place film, "Clay" is entirely filmic. Indeed it is a very experimental film produced by the Harvard Art School. It has become extremely popular due, I'm sure, to the delightful antics of pieces of clay that wiggle and jump and kiss and eat each other.

The least favorite films could be termed the most cinematic--they employ techniques and themes that can be achieved only through film: American Time Capsule uses the technique of kinestasis (a very new film technique) to encapsulate American

history with eye-blinking frames of art works and photographs--a jazz score accompanies; Fiddle de Dee is a pattern of abstract color and light drawn directly on the film by Canadian filmmaker, Norman McLaren, creator of this technique--tune "Listen to the Mockingbird" accompanies; Rainshower is an impressionistic nature study of a summer storm which uses many filmic devices--a subjective camera, detailed close-ups, and a bit of cinema-verite; Begone Dull Care is another draw-on film by McLaren.

In comparing the first poll to the second, it is interesting to note the rise in popularity of some of the more cinematic films. For example, The Champion moved from fourth to first place, replacing Winter of the Witch as the children's favorite film. Like Winter of the Witch, The Champion uses live action, a story, and characterizations. Unlike Winter of the Witch, The Champion is pure film: silent and visual.

It is possible that the children were more able to understand and appreciate the film after making films themselves.

Another interesting jump up on the scale was the one taken by "American Time Capsule": it moved from seventh place to fourth. It is a very cinematic film, relying heavily on the moving feature of film to convey meaning.

Fiddle de Dee, a film made without a camera, increased in popularity also, moving up one place from eighth to seventh.

I suggest that this may mean that the filmmaking experience enabled the children to view the films in a different way and increased their understanding and appreciation of artistic qualities unique to the film medium.

The children were able to explain the change in their choices. After rating the films the second time, they compared this rating to their first one and answered the following questions:

1. "Compare this film rating to your first film rating."

2. "Did you change the order of the films you liked best?" _____

3. "If you did, can you think of some reasons? Do you think filmmaking influenced your change? How and why?"

Some of their responses:

"O.K. One is that I liked both of the films that were changed around. I liked equally well. But I think that since I used the technique of Dragon's Tears so I learned how hard it was to do pixillation and how many problems you can have. And then comparing that, it isn't that hard to do live action (at least easier than pix)."

"When I did my own film I realized how much work the different kinds of films can be. Now I appreciate different films more."

"I think I changed because I felt more at home and with that type of film. I understand how it was done. I think that filmmaking did influence me for the same reason as above."

"Because I learned how hard they were. Yes, I learned how much time they took to make and how hard ideas are to think of."

"I think I did because we made a live action film outside and my thoughts have changed since I have been in filmmaking."

"Yes. Now that I've made a film I like different techniques more."

"I used to like story films more."

"I found out how to make them and I appreciate them."

Joey Kay seems to sum up the children's reactions with an analogy: "I think now that I think I look deeper into a film like a doctor looks into a body."

One of the most desired results of film study and

filmmaking is that children will acquire skills of critical analysis and evaluation for the film medium, must as they do for art, music and literature. Then they are well on their way to becoming enlightened consumers of film art.

Filmmaking Evaluation

The children's ability to make films could perhaps be best demonstrated by showing the films they made. They are excellent examples of the expertise elementary school children can exercise as filmmakers.

Some general observations may assist in evaluating the structure and procedure of the class itself. The children's interest and enthusiasm remained at a peak throughout the eight week filming period. The class was scheduled from 1:00 to 3:00 on Thursday and Friday afternoons. After a passing remark from me that they might arrive a little early to collect equipment and set up, I found it necessary to arrive at 12:30, then 12:15 and finally 12:00 to meet them. Most of the children arrived an hour early to begin filming, even passing up "hot lunch."

Their enthusiasm was infectious and interest in filming spread to other children in the school. The Ames Laboratory School allows the children a great deal of freedom in selection of courses and the children often schedule their own days. Soon after we began filming, we had an "alter-ego" class of observers who shadowed the filmmakers and helped in any way they could. And rather than losing interest because they were not making a film themselves, they came increasingly often and in increasing numbers. The children were co-operative, willing to share time,

ideas and effort, and were extremely patient when waiting to use equipment.

Some difficulties should be noted. Since I was not a regular teacher at this school, I used a multi-purpose room the two afternoons I was there and stored equipment and materials on a cart which was kept in another teacher's room. This situation is not ideal for filmmaking. The children's props, equipment, backdrops, and film should be easily available and kept in a place where they can be responsible for them.

The time scheduled became a problem because so many of the children decided to work individually or in small groups. Because we used a two-hour block of time, some of the children were not well occupied when waiting to use the camera. There were several activities they could become involved in, however: writing story boards, preparing properties, viewing their own film or other films, children's or professional, writing film reviews, preparing credits, assisting other filmmakers, or observing other filmmakers. Some of the younger children did not always make the best use of their time, however, and it would be better if filmmaking time was staggered throughout the day, or fewer groups were making films. Individual filmmaking, or filmmaking in small groups is an ideal independent activity, that could easily be incorporated into an elementary class schedule. Each teacher could tailor her filmmaking activities to the needs and abilities of her students.

In addition to evaluating the child's creative activity and product, the skills he or she acquired, and the structure and

procedure of a teaching unit, it seems important to analyze children's attitudes. The fourteen children in this filmmaking workshop evaluated the class. They were asked the following questions:

1. What did you like about the class?
2. What would you change?
3. Would you like to do more filmmaking? Why?
4. Describe your next film.

Their responses:

1. What did you like about the class:

"They were nice."

"It was interesting and I learned things I hadn't known before. It was also an experience that I probably would otherwise never of had. Before I had the class I wasn't interested in filmmaking."

"It was nice because you worked with people and had a chance to learn. And its fun."

"I like film. I think its interesting. I guess I like everything."

"Everything about it."

"Most everything. I liked filming, splicing, and working on my credits. One thing I did not like very much was when you were not filming you did not have much to do."

"Everything."

"The camera, the inside of the camera, the film, the lights."

"You learn how to do everything with movies."

"Before we started filming she showed us some other films. I liked the montages best and fantasy. I don't especially care for live action."

"That we had lots of equipment and such a nice teacher."

"Helping other people with film, changing the animals around."

"I liked the teacher, the way she taught the subject she taught. I learned a lot about filming and the planning that goes into filming. Through my film I could communicate in a way that I can't in real life. There was a pretty good amount of people, although a lot of times it took a long time to get a small amount done."

"It let you do what you wanted to do as far as ideas and it was very informative. Very neat too."

Answers to the second question, "What would you change?" were brief and to the point: 9 of the 14 children said they would change "nothing"; 2 said the class should meet for a longer period of time and more frequently; and 2 others said we should have a better working space and fewer observers.

All the children responded affirmatively to question 3, "Would you like to do more filmmkaing? Why?," and had some explanation for their reasons. And they all had a new film in mind, some in great detail.

Perhaps the most revealing, certainly the most expressive, form of evaluation of the children's understanding and appreciation of film can be found in their definitions of film. They were asked to respond to the following: "FILM: WHAT IS IT? Write your own definition."

I should single out Danny Swensen's definition because the class reacted to it so strongly, and decided it was a poem. He said: "Film is like your Grandma's preserved pears. Film preserves memories. Film will show things that you are proud of." Other responses included:

"To me film is an expression of yourself. You can tell other people about yourself and they can learn things about (you) that you couldn't have told them by words. It is also an art. In 'Dreamer' I tried to point out some things that are happening now in the world and if people couldn't understand what I was trying to say they could enjoy the film as far as visual effects went."

"Film is a moving picture. It's delicate. You can see things you can't see otherwise. Film and pictures never lie."

"I think film is enjoyment, something you can learn something from. And something that's fun to make. And a lot of times very interesting. Film is artistic. Very nice to look at."

"Film is something too good to describe. So beautiful you can't put it into words. It's so unbelievable how someone who lived 20 or 30 years ago made what I am seeing today. When I used to see a movie, I never thought about how it was made. Now when I see a movie I think of what technique it is."

"A film is a way to express feelings, to explain. A film should make the audience feel something when it's all over--happy, or sad. A film has something that a painting doesn't have--movement, and with movement, you can express deeper feelings, or anything."

"Film, well it's art. It is a good feeling, it is a bad feeling. It is love, it is happiness, and it is hard tense work."

"It is a way of putting your feelings into movement. One can either make a film for the sake of showing your feelings or one can make a film to make people happy."

"It's a way to see things in the past."

"It's something that you can express your feelings. And it's something you can do whatever you want to. It's sometimes hard and sometimes easy."

"Film is something you can express your feelings, too and film is also something to tell a story with."

"Film is fun, lots of work, working with other people, different."

"It's a good way to show your feelings. It's interesting."

Cecilia DeJong seems to sum up these definitions of film with a few succinct phrases: "Film is expression, a feeling, communication. Life that is recorded. Film is art. It's a hell of a lot to edit. Film is work. Film is fun."

Suggestions for Future Film Study and Filmmaking Classes

Like any learning activity, film study and filmmaking units must be created with the ability and needs of the learners in mind. Film is very flexible. It can be an individual activity,

a small group activity, a workshop project, or a group activity for the self-contained elementary school classroom. Some idea of a general teaching pattern grew out of this particular unit on film, with more specific suggestions for particular situations.

Film Study

1. Class periods. Class periods should be 30 minutes to an hour, depending on the length of the film and the maturity of the children. One or two films should be shown each time. It might be best to show two at a time only if it is important to make an immediate comparison between the two films. This would require careful planning in advance to schedule the films appropriately.

2. Number of films. It does not seem necessary to show a large number of films to initiate a filmmaking activity. Ten films for this particular unit seemed excessive. Five films carefully chosen for interest and variety might have accomplished the same results. Ideally, other films could have been shown throughout the filmmaking unit. This was planned for this unit, but time, scheduling and expense were prohibitive. (It is essential to preview films. Many film descriptions are deceiving and are merely filmed versions of books, or instructional films.)

3. Films in the classroom. It would also be advisable to let the children view the films independently when they were interested and let them discuss them in small groups to enrich and extend their viewing experience.

4. Sharing reviews. The children in this class were very interested in reviews and wrote quite a few, both at the

teacher's suggestion and on their own. They reviewed films they had seen in class, films they had seen in theatres and on television (such as the CBS Children's Film Festival on Sunday morning which screens outstanding children's films from all over the world) and each other's films. If time had permitted, it would have been advisable to let them share their reviews, particularly if they had reviewed the same film, and publish them in a weekly newsletter or post them on a bulletin board. A film publication, with reviews, articles dealing with film, an idea exchange, story board ideas, etc., would be an exciting classroom project in connection with film study and filmmaking.

Filmmaking

1. Scheduling. Several possibilities exist for scheduling filmmaking activities.

a. Group filmmaking: an entire class can work on a film project independently at times, and as a group when filming. A class period, or several periods, or even a day could be scheduled for the entire group.

b. Independent filmmakers: children who are working independently on a film or in small groups might work most efficiently at an interest area on their own time. This eliminates the problems of sharing camera and lights and would allow them to be flexible. For example, if they were filming a long seaunce that should not be interrupted, they would not have to stop in the middle to turn the camera over to someone else.

c. Workshop: in small groups, children can share teacher and equipment. Our ratio of 1 teacher, 1 camera, 2 lights:14 children, 8 different films was a little high. If the children had made fewer films, or if we'd had more equipment, time could have been used more efficiently. This would be especially true for a more advanced filmmaking group.

2. Room environment. One thing became especially clear teaching this unit and that is the need for a permanent work space. This could be a room set aside for filming, or an interest center in a classroom.

3. Equipment. In a self-contained classroom, children would be free to handle and use the equipment at their leisure and practice filming skills without actually using film. This would greatly facilitate their ability to create films.

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APPENDIX A

FILMOGRAPHY OF FILMS USED IN THIS UNIT

RAINSHOWER (16 min.; color; Churchill Films; U. of M., MPL, SPL)

This beautifully photographed film by Carol Ballard begins with the threat of rain and its effect on the barnyard and farm, then proceeds, as the rain begins to fall, to show its effect on people. We see the progress of the rainshower from beginning to end. Time and space are compressed. It is an excellent film for emphasizing visual details, suspense, climax, and cause and effect. The only narration comes at the beginning.

THE DRAGON'S TEARS (6 min.; color; MPL, SPL)

The pixillation/animation technique is used to tell the story of the friendship between a fierce dragon and a little boy. This beautiful film uses a Japanese motif in design and accompanying music. Robert Morse narrates.

CLAY (8 min.; b/w; MPL)

This clever and exciting film animates clay. Elliott Noyes, Jr., shows the story of evolution in a surprising, amusing way. Metamorphoses from one animal to another--clams, horses--leading eventually to man himself, take the viewer on a quick trip through all time, accompanied by a brisk jazz sound track.

BEGONE DULL CARE (10 min.; color; U. of M., MPL)

Color and line painted directly on clear film leader boggle the viewer's mind with an exciting array of abstract forms, moving at great speed. Jazz score by the Oscar Peterson Trio accompanies.

THE CHAMPION (10 min.; b/w; U. of M.)

Charlie challenges the heavyweight champ in this early Chaplin one-reeler resurrected for the newest audience of silent film fans. A contemporary sound track has been added which can just as well be turned off--an insinuating narrator tells you what is fully right before a perfectly good sight gag would have conveyed the same meaning much more effectively.

WINTER OF THE WITCH (25 min.; color; MPL)

A live action story of a young boy and his mother who move from the city into the country and share a haunted house with an old witch who knows the secret of making magic pancakes that make everybody happy. Hermoine Gingold is featured as the nostalgic red-headed old witch who plays Rudy Vallee records to ease her loneliness.

FIDDLE DE DEE (3 min.; color; U. of M., MPL)

This is perhaps the best known film by Norman McLaren. Dyes, inks, and transparent paints were applied directly to the film and the surfaces were stippled, scratched, pressed with cloths while wet. The tune "Listen to the Mockingbird" played on the fiddle accompanies.

AMERICAN TIME CAPSULE: A Very Short History of the United States (3 min.; color; U. of M.)

Fast cuts of American history, pictures and photographs, accompanied by a fast drum solo (Sandy Duncan of 50's Rock and Roll fame) covers 200 years in 3 minutes--a fast overview. This film was first showed on the Smothers Brothers television show.

MOODS OF SURFING (20 min.; color; MPL)

This film is sensory, poetic and fun. With photographic skills it catches the varied moods of surfing--the power of the waves, the humor of the surfers, the attraction of man against the sea. Colored lenses and lively music add excitement.

LAFFING GAS (10 min.; b/w; U. of M.)

A 1914 one-reeler featuring Charlie Chaplin in the dentist's office, Laffing Gas lacks the pathos and characterization of the Champion but is replete with Charlie's usual gags; battles with machines, flirtations with pretty girls, and nose-thumbing at everything in general.

APPENDIX B

FILM FOLDER MATERIALS

REVIEW A FILM

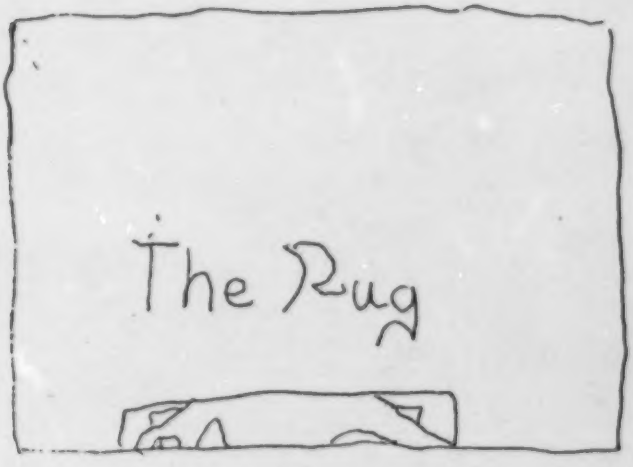
Pictures and movement and sound

Mood and story and ideas

APPENDIX C

STORY BOARDS

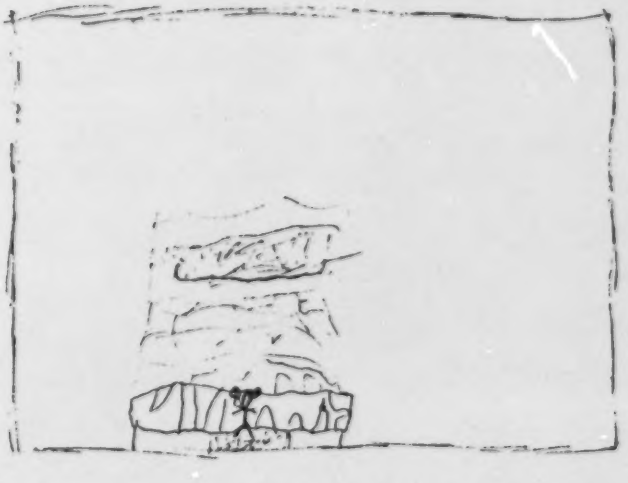
1

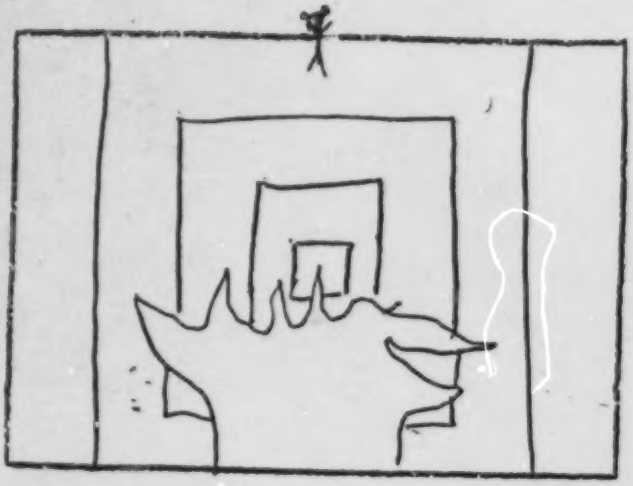


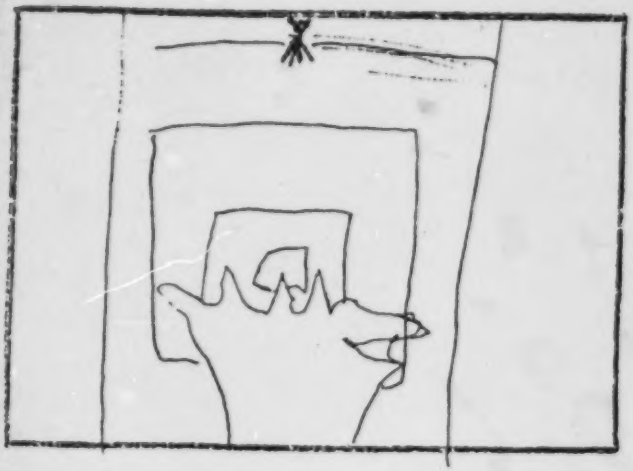
2

Bear

3

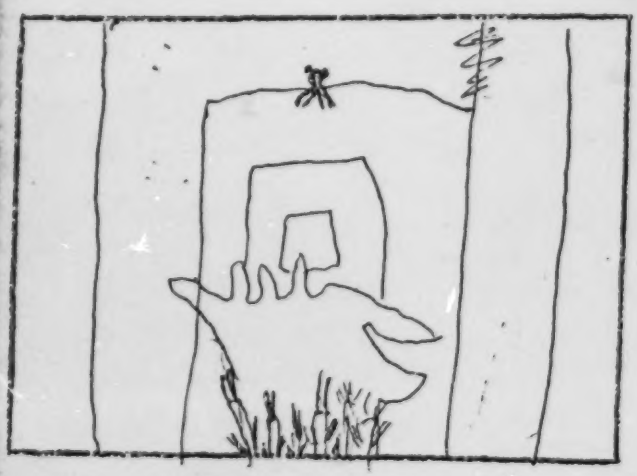






=Bear Sit

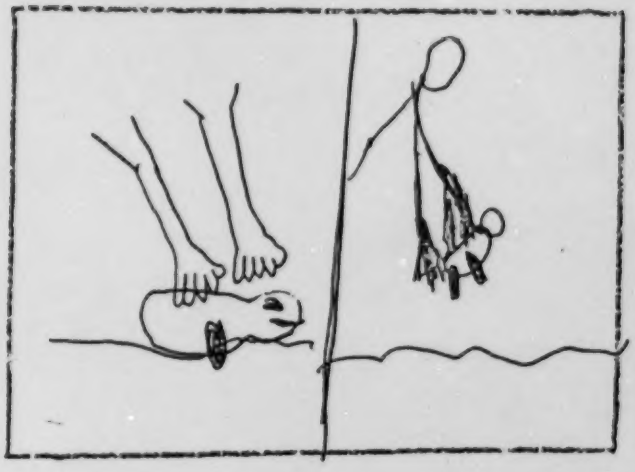
turn around... little by little...



things crall up

1. hands come down to frog.

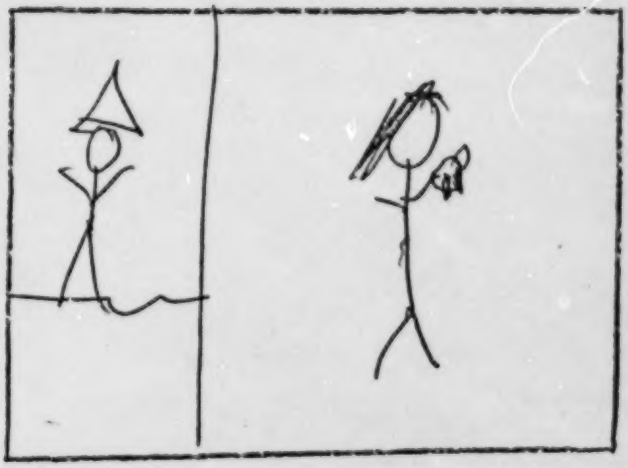
hands go up with frog



2. Girl pats frog.

3. Witch creeps out and sees little girl

Move camera From witch to little girl



Story "Rufus" removed due to poor copy

APPENDIX D

EIGHT CHILDREN'S FILMS

The following descriptions of the eight films made during the filmmaking unit were written by the children themselves. Additional comments and observations have been added by the teacher. The best way to "see" a film is to look at it.

CLAY (2 min.; pixillation; color; silent)

Inanimate clay brought to life in a motion picture. Filmed in pieces but all put together. An alligator, a snake and a monster! Color film, super-duper 8.

Cecilia DeJong - 11; Joey Kay - 11.

(This film was inspired by another film titled CLAY which was shown to the children as part of the film study unit. They adopted this film's technique and style but created their own creatures and comedy. These two children planned every shot very carefully, showing great concern for detail and continuity. Personal cooperation and technical expertise marked their first filmmaking venture.)

COLLEGE (4 min.; live action impressionistic documentary; color; Grieg's "In the Hall of the Mountain King" accompanies)

My film is about the college. I use panning and close-ups.

Danny Swensen - 10.

(The story board for this film was minimal--a few words written in the picture squares, the names of buildings on the campus at the University of Wisconsin, River Falls. The finished film, however, is a tight, obviously well thought out product, beautifully filmed and executed. Although Danny spoke or wrote very little in class, he had a natural affinity for the camera which resulted in a very lovely and expressive form of visual and auditory communication, his film of the college. It was necessary to demonstrate the use of the camera to him only once--then it was his instrument, and film his medium. He worked outside (all but one other film was made indoors) and alone except for the company of the teacher whose chief task it was to keep people from walking in front of the camera and holding her coat over camera and cameraman on snowy days to keep the lens clear, moisture out of the camera, and prevent a cold. Danny's film description above is typical of his written work--simple and brief. His film is anything but typical--subtle and complex.)

THE DREAMER OF ROSENBURY (2 min.; pixillation-animation; color; taped dialogue and original music written and played by the filmmakers)

A film that is made for children, but is equally enjoyed by the older set. A story about a small boy who makes the people of a town realize the value of nature. Pixillated with paper, the film looks and is simplicity. The music was written by the same two talented young people who wrote and edited the film. Beautiful.

Cathy Wolfe - ; Kara Korsgaard -

(Need one say more?)

MR. SQUIGGLE (4 min.; pixillation; color; silent)

My film is about two pieces of yarn. One is green. The other is purple. First the purple comes in and squiggles around. Then the green comes in and does the same thing. It was a pixillation.

Cheryl Richardson -

(Cheryl worked alone--quietly and independently. She occasionally needed prodding and a little help to get set up and filming, but always had a clear idea of where she was going with her story board. It's not certain whether her film developed the way she expected--it's long and there is a sameness throughout that makes one think there was a gap between her ideas and the way she was able to execute them. She filmed her credits last and there is a degree of technical proficiency and humor in them that is lacking in the film itself. Cheryl might be better able to pull together her concepts, percepts and product through another filmmaking experience.)

RUFUS (5 min.; pixillation; color; taped dialogue)

Rufus the lion, king of the jungle, feels unwanted with the other animals. He leaves to make friends with other animals and gets in trouble. Pixillation. Stuffed animals come alive. Much color.

Edith Barrett - 11; Annika Bouvin - 11

(This film developed from a very detailed story and story board written by Edith. Perhaps too verbal, it tends to be overlong in spots in order to fit in all the dialogue, some of which was unnecessary since the visuals are very well done and appealing (stuffed animals cavort about the jungle). These two girls needed very little help beyond the initial introduction to the camera. They virtually made the film themselves.)

FILO TO THE RESCUE (4 min.; live-action; color; silent)

My film has witches and dogs and little girls. The witch is very mean and catches her and the dog saves her and they live happily ever after. (Lynda Fiske)

Lynda Fiske - 9; Amanda - 8

(These three third graders had some initial difficulty in cooperating to produce a workable story board. Finally, Lynda emerged as a leader, and with the aid of specific teacher directions these girls produced a charming and humorous film in the silent thriller tradition.)

THE RUG (3 min.; pixillation; color; silent)

An exciting drama about a bear and a colorful rug using the technique pixillation. The bear (Roo) unrolls his rug but then...oh no...what's happening?...watch it and see!

Kathy Nottingham - 9

(With a firm grasp on the film form from beginning to end, Kathy produced a whimsical shocker with great audience appeal.)

YOURS, TRULY YOU (5 min.; draw-on 16mm; color; silent)

The exciting film about Nothing! Absolutely nothing! Yes, use your hours of imagination, but we supply the foundation. Weird music. Weird drawings. (Laura Wild)

Yours, Truly You, an exciting film about scribbles that you use your imagination. You make the film. You dream up what you think. (Gretchen Palmquist)

Laura Wild - 11; Gretchen Palmquist - 9

(Drawing directly on clear film leader, these girls produced an exciting show of light and color. It is interesting to note from their comments that they are aware of the abstract nature of such a film, suggesting the viewer must "make" the film himself.)

APPENDIX E

CHILDREN'S FILM SHOWING ANNOUNCEMENTS

FILM!

The films that are to be shown today (May 8) were all made by students of ames lab school in River Falls, wisc. Most of the films were pixalated films or live action although one film was made using the draw on technique.

FAT LIONS, SKINNY BEARS,CLAY THAT SQUIGGLES ALOT.
TOUGH WITCHES, SISSY UNIVERSITIES,
EVEN DRAWINGS WITH CHICKEN POX,LOVE DREAMERS,
AMES DREAMERS,
THE DREAMERS THAT MAKE FILM FUN.....

THE ORDER OF THE FILMS WILL BE:

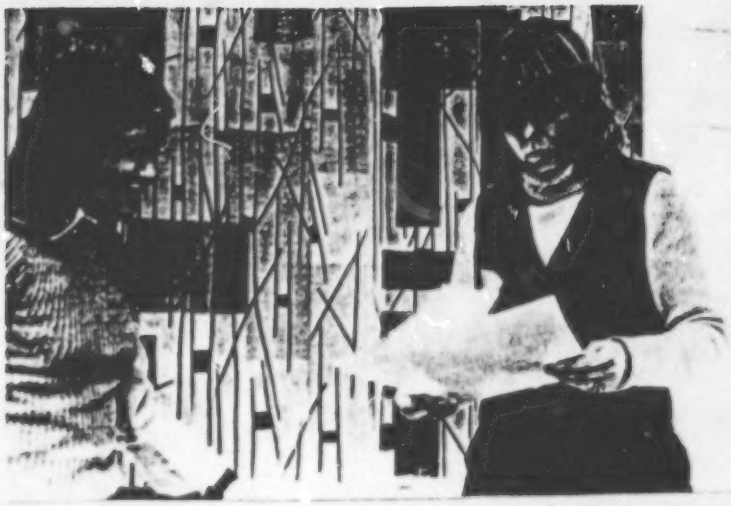
1. The University- Dan Swensen
2. Rufas- Edith Barrett- Annika Beuvin
3. The Rug- Kathy Nettingham
4. Clay- Cecilia De Zeng- Jeey Kay
5. Yeurs Truly You- Laura Wild- Gretchen Palmquist
6. Fido to the rescue- Amanda Phillips- Sally Schultz- Lynda Friski
7. The Dreamers of Roseburry- Cathy Wolfe- Kara Korsgard

We would like to announce that the Dreamer of Roseburry was not only made by Cathy Wolfe and Kara Korsgard, But they also wrote and played their music.

********** Our thanks to Carol Cox**********

APPENDIX F

PICTURE STORY: FILMMAKING UNIT



Consulting story boards.

Setting up properties.

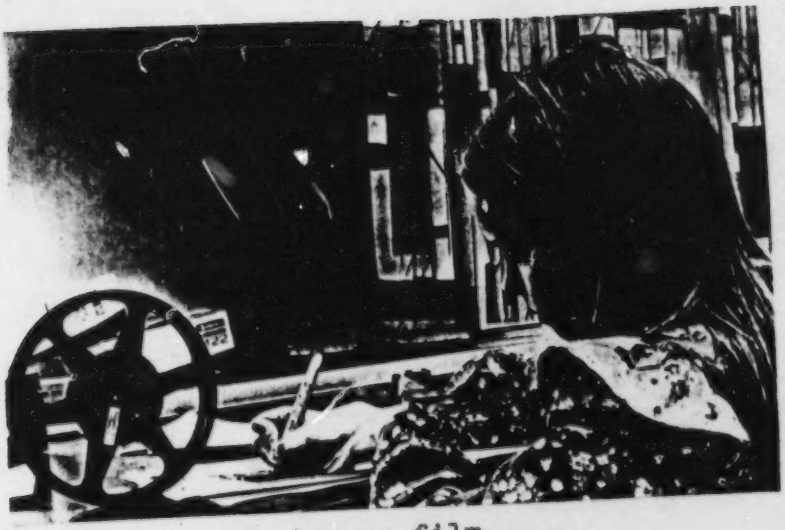
Filming

Painting scenery

Setting up a shot.

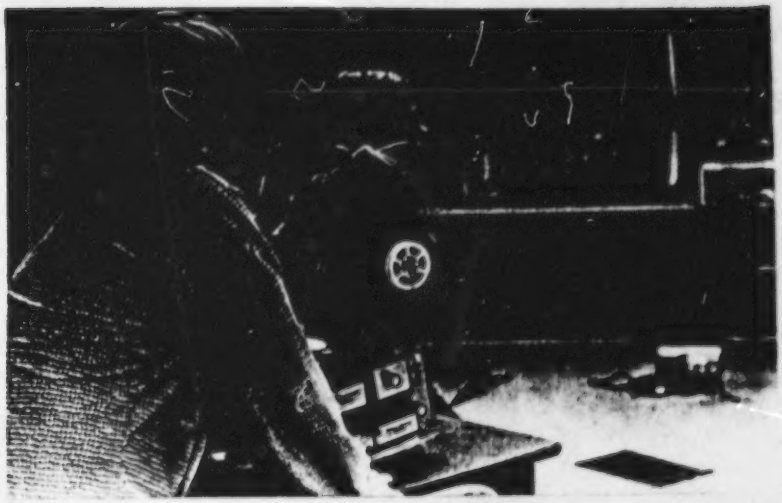
Pixillating.

Filming: pixillating and live-action.

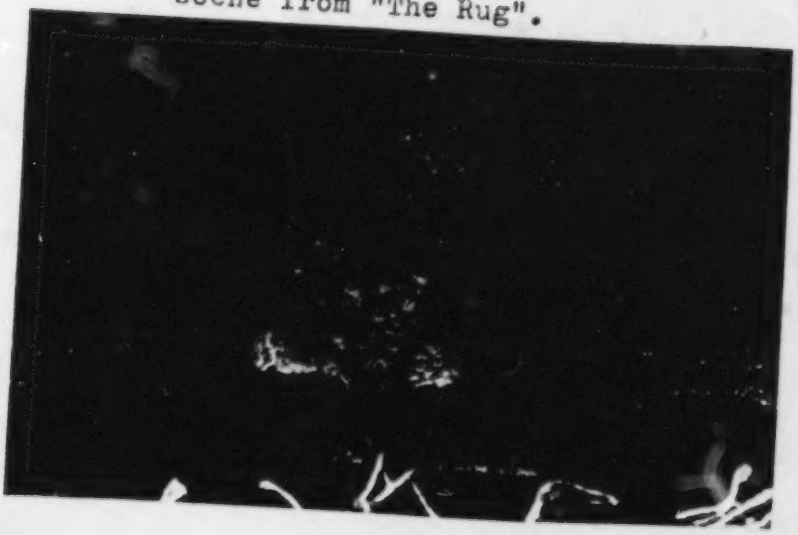


Drawing on film.

Editing.



Viewing developed film.

Splicing.

Scene from "The Rug".